



New 32 page section: Media +

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What makes him tick

Vogue
How to become editor

David Bailey
Still master of seduction

François Pienaar interview

with 16 pages of appointments

Labour is ready to ditch Unionists

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair has decided to get tough with the Ulster Unionists by offering no concessions to them on Labour's Northern Ireland policy before tonight's crucial vote of censure.

The Labour leadership has written off the hope of David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, delivering his nine MPs in a vote of no-confidence to bring down the Government before 1 May. The Labour leader is therefore prepared to call the Unionists' bluff over

**Mo Mowlam interview,
page 2**

into the Bloody Sunday massacres. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, is holding in reserve a further concession, to give powers to an Ulster grand committee to vet legislation through the Commons which could be offered, if the government whips fear a defeat.

Mr Blair said at the weekend he did not believe Labour would win tonight's vote, following signs by some Ulster Unionists they would abstain. Labour is prepared to test the Unionist's backbone on the beef issue, which is of crucial importance to Ulster farmers, many of whom are Loyalists, because the Labour leadership has now calculated that Mr Trimble will not seek to bring down the Government.

The Unionists may also have calculated that their best chance lies in propping up the Government until May to limit the chances of an overall Labour majority, in order to give the Unionists more leverage in a hung Parliament. Ms Mowlam is holding to the Government's line on the peace process, but she believes that a right-wing Tory Party, with Unionist support, will withdraw support for the bipartisan approach to Ulster pursued by John Major. "I am not convinced that bipartisanship will hold because I think we will see a very different Tory Party after the election," she said.

Ms Mowlam, who held private talks with Mr Trimble last week, said she would not soften the criteria for allowing Sinn Fein into the peace talks, but she is sticking by her support for the North report, and she said she was prepared to "look again" at the Bloody Sunday killings.

In spite of weekend reports that two left-wing MPs had been demoted from Labour's backbench committee on Northern Ireland, the Labour leadership believes that the Unionists are at a crossroads and will turn back to the Tories in the next Parliament.

The Government has offered a series of concessions to secure the vital votes of the Ulster Unionists and hold on to power, including a U-turn to lift the export ban on Ulster herds; delaying the implementation of the North report with legislation to curb the Loyalist marching season; and the expected rejection of demands for a fresh inquiry.



Kew shows off its orchids

The Miltonia hybrid (above) is just one of the blooms on show at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in south-west London where the 1997 Orchid Festival, which ends on 31 March, displays a selection from the world's 20,000 orchid species, 5,000 of which are grown at Kew for research and conservation, as well as for their beauty. Photograph: Jason Bye

Looted gifts are tip of iceberg

Andrew Gumbel

far from the only ones. Hundreds of precious items, particularly icons, national costumes and priceless Roman-era sculptures, have vanished from Albania's national and local museums and are believed to have sunk into a giant black market that is still thriving today.

Museums in Apolonia and Butrint in the south of the country, once considered among the most prestigious in the country, are now virtually empty. A famous weapons museum in the beautiful southern

town of Gjirokastra has lost every last weapon it ever had. A history museum in Berat, site of the first provisional government set up by the Communists in 1944, has been converted into a private video bingo parlour. The whereabouts of its former contents are unknown.

Much of the looting took place in the wild, uncontrollable spasm of violence and political turmoil that shook the country in 1990-91 as the Communist system collapsed and the country struggled to prepare its first

democratic elections. But according to Neritan Ceka, former director of the National Archaeological Museum and a leader of one of Albania's opposition parties, the government must shoulder blame for failing to take any action to protect the national heritage.

"They have spent millions on the police but nothing on a special force to look after museums and artworks," Mr Ceka said. "They have set aside no funds to recover objects stolen in the initial frenzy."

Tirana attacks Independent journalist

The Albanian government has responded to *The Independent*'s reports that it is in fact a gangster regime involved in drug-smuggling, gunrunning, sanctions busting and money laundering. The Albanian news agency ATA put out a government statement on Saturday saying that reports by the *Independent* writer Andrew Gumbel were close to what Albania's tabloid press has been saying in recent years. "The article alleges that civil liberties, independent media and democracy in general has suffered

under this government. The Democratic Party government, which was elected in March 1992, has done its utmost to build the democracy and the rule of law, despite the difficulties presented by the horrible communist government," the statement said. "This political bias in articles on Albania is nothing new for Andrew Gumbel," the statement continued. "I regret very much that a prestigious paper like *The Independent* comes to publish articles of that low quality written by an unreliable journalist."

According to Albanians who have taken part in the traffic, large numbers of artworks passed illegally into the hands of diplomats from one country in particular who were posted to the country in 1991-92 when everyone was anxious to have foreign aid and private investment pushed in their direction.

Still more was taken out of the country and sold. Police in Greece have recently recovered four Roman-era marble heads from the archaeological museum in Butrint, which is just a couple of miles from the Greek border in southern Albania. Other works have been recovered in Munich.

The traffic has been so intense, according to Mr Ceka and other sources, that the market has been contaminated with fakes from Italy and Greece. According to one report a gang importing fake icons was forced to give up their enterprise because the black market was already flooded with genuine articles.

Investors' protests, page 8

QUICKLY

BP accused

Bodyguards of a senior BP executive in Colombia threatened to "skin alive" a protester campaigning against the oil giant, alleges a Euro MP.

Richard Howitt, Labour MEP for Essex South, says that the Colombian army and some right-wing paramilitary groups have oppressed people who have protested about BP's operations in Colombia. There have been death threats and assassinations.

Page 3

Daily Mail' censured

The Attorney General is to consider whether the *Daily Mail* has committed contempt of court by accusing five white men of murdering black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

The announcement came after the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, yesterday accused the newspaper of interfering with the course of justice.

Page 2

Musical discord

Two musicals which graphically illustrate the often huge divide between critical acclaim and public taste received major recognition last night at the Olivier awards.

Page 5

Emu on a tightrope

The success or failure of a single currency will depend on decisions made during the next year, according to an authoritative new report.

Page 18

£30 – is this enough to make you vote Tory?

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The boost to pay packets from this year's income tax cuts will be felt from the end of April just in time, the Government hopes, to help sway voting intentions for a May Day election.

The increase in after-tax pay for the majority of people will be in the range of £15 to £30 – the latter sum enough to pay for three bottles of Tesco Champagne; a meal for four at Pizza Land Manchester; a Superape rail return from London to Edinburgh; a 22-minute mid-day call to Malagasy; or 12 one-hour swims at a local pool.

The reduction in the basic rate of income tax by 1p to 23p and increase in tax allowances announced in November's Budget will take effect from 1 April and will increase most taxpayers' take-home pay by the end of the month. Somebody earning £20,000 a year will gain an extra £17 a month, and a £30,000 salary will generate an extra £31 a month after tax.

This year's tax boost is similar in size to last year's, which delivered the highest one-off increase in spending power since 1986. This resulted in a huge improvement in consumer confidence last spring.

Surveys show that confidence has since recovered to levels last seen in the late 1980s, when the economy boomed following Nigel Lawson's 1p reduction in the basic rate of income tax.

Government strategists are hoping that a similar boost this year will pay an electoral dividend.

People who will gain when the Alliance and Leicester and Woolwich building societies join the stock market, could also receive the letters telling them how many free shares they will get in the fortnight before 1 May. These two societies will all be seeking to avoid.

give out share windfalls worth up to £6bn in June, to be followed by the Halifax stock-market flotation worth £10.4-12bn in July.

The Conservatives' electoral hopes are resting on the economic upturn, and the tax cuts provide one of their strongest cards. Although mortgage costs are near to 30-year lows, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, has become embroiled in an embarrassing public row with Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, over whether



no interest rates should rise before the election.

Mr George has turned the heat up with an interview published in a German magazine today. Asked about whether interest rates should go up, Mr George downplayed the Chancellor's excuse – the strong pound – for not increasing the cost of borrowing.

Mr George said: "Past experience has shown that the danger is in not being able to recognise when to restrain domestic demand. Then interest rates have to be increased more strongly later, producing the type of boom and bust we were all seeking to avoid."

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هذا من الأصل

Urgent short

to be held into
of teenagersto be launched next month into
of 15 and 16 year-olds along
the Coast Inspector of Prisonsare continuing to be held
in prison despite government
known to be concerned about
criminal and drug habits, and
adolescents. There is also evidence
of holding to provide the legal minimum
of 15, and teenagers in their care.In 1995, a total of 1,888 young
people being held in prison established
in 1995 in 1995, a 72 per cent
of the Royal ArmAn analysis it is increasingly needed, a
newly formed task force to
overhaul and the role of the
minister of experienced managers
with the prospect of fulfilling our
ambitions.**Dorrell ultimatum**Leaders have given Stephen Dorrell
a ultimatum over supermarket surges
in the general election.A negotiating committee, led by the Secretary of State for
Government to the Prime Minister, "It doesn't project a
general practice, and does
not believe in Mi 100%".**On pain case**adults to inflict punishment
by human rightsthrough three British
and the European Court of Human Rights
and the European Convention on Human Rights.Liberty has been
and the European Convention on Human Rights.**In final warning**a statement from the government
A final warning to the government
to end its pledge to end
the use of capital punishment
in the UK.**for life**a statement from the government
A final warning to the government
to end its pledge to end
the use of capital punishment
in the UK.**Troubled history:** Jessica and Unity (top) as children; Jessica in recent years (left); Unity, Diana and Nancy in their
heyday; and 'Debo' - the Duchess of Devonshire

Clare Garner

Never marry a Mitford or you'll get involved in family feuds which carry on for generations. The sagas of the literary sisters go beyond the grave – and, in this latest instance, concern precisely that graves.

There was more than one notable absence at Jessica Mitford's memorial celebration at the Lyric Theatre in London last night. Nobody expected Diana, Lady Mosley, to turn up. The widow of Sir Oswald Mosley had fallen out with her sister Jessica decades ago and they had not spoken since.

But everyone was hoping to hear the Hon Deborah Freeman-Mitford speak about her late sister, the most rebellious of the celebrated sibship, who died aged 78 last summer. Debo, the Duchess of Devonshire is known was even down on the memorial programme to speak.

Debo's decision followed reports last week that the memorial gathering was to be a festival of all the bizarre rituals highlighted by Jessica in her best-selling expose of the American funeral industry, *The American Way of Death*, written in 1963.

Rumours that four undertakers would be parading their wares and a Cadillac-shaped coffin sitting on the stage summoned images of an occasion with which Debo wanted nothing to do.

"Debo took offence," said one source. "She thought: 'This isn't a memorial for my beloved sister, it's a circus in a theatre.' It's very sad. It's a total misunderstanding."

But organisers were doing their best to play down Debo's no-show last night. "She's the only one who is still fit enough to come," said Morag Pavich, one of the event's co-ordinators. "We put her as the member of the family that would most probably be there, but it will probably be Jessica's son, Benji, who will do something small to introduce the evening."

No unity for the Mitfords – even beyond the grave

The official reason why Debo didn't come was that she was unwell. "She's not been in good health," explained Ms Pavich.

"She really wants to attend but said she wouldn't be able to say until the day. We're not sure she hasn't been ill. That's all we've been told."

However, a spokeswoman at Debo's house, Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, had not heard the Duchess was ill. "Her grace is

away, I'm afraid," she said yesterday. "I'm not sure when she is back."

As it turned out, the memorial was not the blindingly whacky event it was trumped up to be. The death displays were limited to books and films and a DIY coffin.

"There are no displays actually on the stage," insisted Ms Pavich. "There is a green coffin – a disposable coffin – and then just books and paraphernalia and the personalities of the day."

Some might say it would not have been a true Mitford send-off without a token squabble between the sisters. Since their early twenties, Jessica and Diana only saw each other once, when they met for half an hour as their elder sister, Nancy, lay dying.

"I quite honestly don't mind what Deca [a family nickname for Jessica] says or thinks," Lady Mosley, 86, said recently. "She means absolutely nothing to me at all. Not because she's a Communist but simply because she's a rather boring person, really."

Jessica's death from lung cancer last summer was not enough to reconcile Diana.

"I'm afraid I won't be going," Lady Mosley said of her sister's memorial. Their falling-out dates back to the Second World War, when Jessica denounced Diana as dangerous because of her links with Fascism, and she was kept in jail for three-and-a-half years.

Six-hundred friends and family were invited to "Deca's" memorial. The speakers included Helene Kennedy QC, Maya Angelou, the American poet, and John Mortimer, the novelist.

Jessica was once telephoned in California, where she lived most of her life, by an English journalist who was writing an article about the Mitford sisters. She had already spoken to Nancy who had said: "Sisters stand between one and life's cruel circumstances." Jessica was startled into saying that surely sisters were life's cruel circumstances.

Fortunately, such events only seem to happen about once every 100,000 years, said Dr Segall. But they have clearly occurred before: coral remains have been found 300 metres up the side of a basalt mountain in Hawaii, a finding that cannot be explained by the rise of an underwater volcano, but instead by a huge wave subsuming the island.

While the technology exists to monitor the movement of the underwater block, there is still no way to predict whether the move – if and when it comes – will be sudden, prompting a "megashump", or slower, like an underwater landslide. The latter would cause little damage.

That scenario is more hopeful, but we haven't recorded any events like that happening. It's an open question.

One problem with a massive tsunami might be the public's reaction to such a spectacular one-off event. In 1960, a tsunami hit Hilo in Hawaii; when the public was warned about it, many headed down to the beach to see it come in. Sixty people were killed in the afternoon.

Moving mountain brings end of the world – sooner or later

Charles Arthur
Seattle

An undersea mountain block, 1,800 cubic kilometres in size, which is creeping across the ocean floor from Hawaii, could cause a huge ocean tsunami that would devastate Japan and wreck the world economy.

The wave would travel across the Pacific Ocean as fast as a passenger jet, yet would be barely noticeable until it approached the shoreline. Then it would devastate areas up to 300 metres above sea level, killing people and causing huge amounts of damage to buildings.

The question is, can we forecast when it will happen? And the answer is, at present,

no," said Dr Paul Segall, a geophysicist at Stanford University, California at the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference here.

But measurements taken by radar on board orbiting satellites have shown that on the south flank of the undersea Kilauea volcano, off Hawaii, there is a huge block 20 kilometres long by 10 km by 9 km, which is moving at 7 centimetres per year, forced along by lava flowing from underneath it.

While that might not sound much, it creates the possibility of a "megashump" – as the block crashes from one position to another, rather than sliding gently. That would cause an undersea earthquake equivalent in

magnitude to 7 or 8 on the Richter scale – which would prove devastating on land. Thousands of tonnes of water would be shocked into motion, and would head west across the Pacific. The tidal wave would take 15 hours to arrive in Japan, where the effects would be dramatic, and it could take years for the country to recover.

Fortunately, such events only seem to happen about once every 100,000 years, said Dr Segall. But they have clearly occurred before: coral remains have been found 300 metres up the side of a basalt mountain in Hawaii, a finding that cannot be explained by the rise of an underwater volcano, but instead by a huge wave subsuming the island.

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BP accused on death threats

MP says bodyguard of company executive threatened to 'skin' Colombian protestor

Nicholas Schoon

their undercover war with the
guerrillas.

Bodyguards of a senior BP executive in Colombia threatened to "skin alive" a protestor campaigning against the company, an MP claims.

Richard Howitt, Labour MEP for Essex South, says the Colombian army and paramilitary groups have oppressed people who have protested about BP's operations. There have been death threats and assassinations.

After interviewing and tape-recording community leaders and pressure-group representatives during a visit to the oilfield region of Casanare, he is demanding BP review its relationship with the Colombian army.

"I believe BP managers must know or should know about human-rights violations carried out in the company's name, and with what appears to me to be the direct collusion of some of their staff," he said.

The company rejects this, and says if it found any evidence of staff or contractors involved in illegal acts it would dismiss them and pass the information to the Colombian prosecutor-general. What Mr Howitt and BP can agree on is that it is working in a dangerous and complex social and political environment in Casanare, with security and blockade from local people in



Risky business: The oil industry in Colombia has to contend with numerous problems. Photograph: Rex Features

recent years, including a strike by security guards.

The main grievances have been that communities have not received enough of the new oil wealth, local people have not been given a fair share of the new jobs, contractors are paying unfairly low wages and the environment has been damaged.

Some strikes have ended in violent clashes. The judicial authorities are investigating the killings of four agitators in a town, El Morro, two years ago.

Mr Howitt visited Colombia as part of a parliamentary delegation in autumn and alleged BP had an improper relation-

ally knew of the incident.

"They started telling me bad words... that I should stop fucking around, otherwise they would skin me alive," reads the translation.

Asked if the threats were made by Mr Mead's guards, the man said: "It is true that they were security guards of Phil Mead. He is a good person. I have spoken to him. The bad thing is the Colombian people who surround these people."

The threats, he said, were repeated by men in a car which he knew to be hired by BP security staff. In another testimony, a former council worker said

that at an angry meeting at an oil well where local people were demanding work a BP community affairs officer telephoned the company's Central Production Facility. "About an hour later the army came in. They had helicopters... they saw about 50 people and realized we weren't armed. I am a witness where a BP person calls another BP person calling for the army to intervene. They said there were 50 guerrillas wanting to take over the well."

Mr Howitt said he would not name his witnesses because it would endanger their lives.

"I've found there is a pattern. If you speak out against BP you can be roughed up, then be denounced as a guerrilla. And once you're denounced then the paramilitaries can threaten you or even kill you. I listened to these people and I believe they are innocent of any link with the guerrillas. They don't want to be involved in violence and they live in fear."

He said that on his visit "We were constantly watched by the army, stopped at several roadblocks. I was ordered out of a car and showed up against it. I don't think BP should leave Colombia; it's not the company which has made it a violent society. But they have to achieve the same standards for human rights as they would anywhere else."

BP said its policy was to "operate strictly within the law in Colombia, refusing to pay extortion money to guerrillas and relying on the protection of the police and army."

The company had found evidence that two of its contractors had links with the guerrillas, and had stopped using them. "We have behaved in what we think is an exemplary fashion in difficult circumstances," said a spokesman. "If anyone has evidence to the contrary, bring it to us and we will take it to the prosecutor-general of Colombia."

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news



Well-loved: Rabbi Hugo Gryn, whose memorial has become a focal point for bitter debate. Photograph: Sydney Harris

In life he was the best-loved rabbi; his death is tearing the Jewish community apart

Louise Jury

Rabbi Hugo Gryn was a survivor of Auschwitz, a broadcaster renowned for his wry and compassionate contributions to Radio 4's *The Moral Maze* and arguably Britain's best-loved Jewish leader.

So when he died last year, many in the Jewish reform movement which he led were furious that Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Britain's largest group of orthodox Jews, failed to attend the funeral.

This Thursday the Chief Rabbi is expected to make partial redress when he speaks at an evening of tribute to Rabbi Gryn. But in doing so he has angered many orthodox rabbis who regard the late rabbi's brand of reform Judaism as heretical.



Chief Rabbi: Jonathan Sacks

Five hundred people are expected at the ticket-only meeting at the Congress Hall, central London. Organised by the non-religious Board of Deputies of British Jews, the event is intended as a secular memorial.

The speakers will not only in-

clude the Chief Rabbi, but Hugo Gryn's son, David, together with the Bishop of Oxford, the Right Rev Richard Harries, and Rabbi Tony Bayfield, who heads the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain.

But, by attempting to bring people together from all sides, the memorial has become a focal point for a bitter debate on relations between the traditional orthodox and the liberal reform branches of the Jewish community.

The position of the Chief Rabbi is at the heart of the matter.

In shunning the funeral, and then attending the tribute, the Chief Rabbi has been walking a tightrope that many on both sides believe is an unsustainable position.

He is often regarded as the leader of British Jews and is, for example, the only Jewish leader at the annual remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph. Yet his United Synagogue attracts only 40 per cent of the country's 250,000 or so Jews.

By sitting alongside reformers on Thursday – and justifying the decision by pointing to Rabbi Gryn's important interfaith work – he will earn disapproval from his own side. Yet, if he fails to attend, the schism with reformers could be irreparable and his authority weakened.

Neville Nagler, the Board of Deputies' director-general, said that they hoped all sections of the community would come. "It's a meeting, not a religious service, and most people seem to find that quite acceptable," he said.

But not everyone: Rabbi Isaac Sifrin, an ultra-orthodox Lubavitch, said he would not

"adjudicate" on what the Chief Rabbi did. However, Rabbi Gryn had been a reformer and "if Judaism means anything then nobody can change it... I cannot give credibility to something which I believe goes against the truth. All that I believe was given to us through Moses from God on Mount Sinai."

However, David Walsh, vice-president of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, said he would be very pleased to see Rabbi Sacks at the meeting. Any divisions, he stressed, were within the orthodox community, not between the liberals and the traditionalists.

Yet he thought it very sad that the United Synagogue of the Chief Rabbi – which, he said, contained "very much middle of the road people" – felt unable to take part in any service alongside the reformed synagogues.

Rabbi David J Goldberg, chairman of the Rabbinic Conference of progressive rabbis, said it was "ridiculous" that the orthodox should claim not to "recognise" the reform wing when it had been around for 200 years.

"This is where the fight is going to start – because we're not looking for acknowledgement. I find it unacceptable and bizarre that a person who has the allegiance of only 40 per cent of the people can be touted as a spokesman for Jewry."

However, he recognised that the Chief Rabbi was now in a difficult position.

"If I were a betting man," he said, "I would be inclined to put a small wager on a diplomatic illness between now and Thursday."

DAILY POEM

On hesitating to depict my grandmother

By Gillian Allnutt

*She must have alighted like a bird
into Bertha Elizabeth,
being the fourth
of John King, Gentleman, late of Hartest, had*

*by Sudbury, Late of London, now, her body lies
alone, eludes me, bone of her
impenetrable bone. Her
soul – I wouldn't sentimentalise.*

*Her stone's among the stones
of gentlemen within the wall, the toll
of bell, bird-chorale.
But she's flown.*

This poem is from Gillian Allnutt's fourth collection, *Nantucket and the Angel* (Bloodaxe, £6.95). The poems trace the spiritual biography of the poet's "imagined 90-year-old self" and is "dominated by powerful old women, including the mystic Julian of Norwich".

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Olivier Awards: Tommy wins top prize in spite of early closure and Martin Guerre triumphs after revamp

news

Accolades for best musicals confound the critics

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Two musicals which graphically illustrate the often huge divide between critical acclaim and public taste received major recognition last night at the Laurence Olivier awards.

First, there was vindication for Sir Cameron Mackintosh, whose much troubled musical *Martin Guerre* won the best new musical award. It also won best theatre choreographer award for Bob Avian. The show was revamped after poor notices, but Sir Cameron always claimed the public had warmed to the show more than the critics.

Tommy, a musical adaptation of The Who's rock opera, won

the United States' Critic's Choice Award - which he contained very much less to take part in any negotiations.

Ruby David J. Gold, chairman of the National Institute of Progressives, said it was "a shock" that *Tommy* should receive "recognition" when it had been closed for two years.

It was, however, the opening to *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, directed by Trevor Nunn, which won the critics' award for best director.

However, the critics did not share the public's enthusiasm for the play, which

was well-deserved triumph for *ART*, the poignant comedy by Yashima Reza, which won best comedy.

Best actor in a musical was Robert Lindsay for his Fagin in *Oliver*, while Maria Friedman won best actress in a musical for her performance in *Passion*. Trevor Eve won the award for best supporting actor for his role in *Uncle Vanya*, and Clive Rowe was best supporting actress for *Guys and Dolls*. Tim Goodchild was best costume designer for *The Merchant of Venice* at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The best new dance production went to English National Ballet's *Cinderella*, the outstanding achievement in dance award went to Rambert Dance for their season at the London Coliseum; the best new opera production was English National Opera's *Tristan And Isolde*, and the outstanding achievement in opera went to Elgar Howarth for conducting ENO's *Die Soldaten* and *The Prince of Homburg*.

In a glittering night at theatre's premier awards ceremony, the actress Janet McTeer completed an extraordinary week, winning the Laurence Olivier Award for best actress for her riveting portrayal of

Carmen may not be quite a musical, and according to many critics the current production at the Royal Albert Hall is not quite an opera. The reviews last week described it as "cheap-skate", "low-grade" and "third-rate - a disgrace".

But audiences, many of them new to opera, seem to have enjoyed the show put on by impresario Raymond Gubbay, and the number of performances has been extended so that as many as 50,000 people will be able to see the production.

Yesterday Mr Gubbay said: "I think I will simply not invite the critics next year when we stage the next opera. What is the point? They take up seats to rubbish us. And the public ignore them anyway... and enjoy themselves."

Last night's Laurence Olivier Awards highlighted the fact that there is a gulf between critical opinion of many of the big shows and the public's acclaim for them.

The Oliviers stand alone among the awards ceremonies in having a large representation of ordinary theatregoers on the voting panels.

Whereas panels consisting only of critics often make judgements baffling to the public (such as Mike Leigh's *Secrets And Lies* being denied any prize at the Evening Standard British Film Awards earlier this month), the Olivier Awards for theatre give the public's view and this can be strikingly at odds with that of the experts.

The shortlist for best new musical consisted of *Passion*, *Nine* and *Martin Guerre*. *Passion* and *Martin Guerre* went on to fea-

ture on the shortlists of several other categories, including awards for acting, choreography and set design.

Yet the critics gave mixed reviews to Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*. And *The Daily Telegraph* panned after the first night of *Martin Guerre*: "It's not magnificient but c'est le guerre," continuing in plainer English: "The result is a terrible tendency to humourless portentousness

in both music and script."

Producers are keen to stress that musicals, more than any other form of theatre, need time to develop. Both *Martin Guerre* and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* were reworked and improved within months of opening.

There is no easy answer for the critics, who have to review the opening of a show rather than see it after its first six

months. But the public certainly appear to rely on words of mouth, recommendations from friends and their own gut instincts.

Sir Cameron Mackintosh, producer of *Martin Guerre* and *Les Misérables*, feels very strongly that critics can be out of tune with the public, particularly with musicals. *Les Misérables* at its Barbican premiere in 1985 got a very lukewarm reception by the critics, he said.

It is not just contemporary events which prove him right. When *Cats* opened in 1981 one paper wrote: "...strange how potent cheap music is," said Noel Coward. And cheap, I'm afraid, is the right word of Mr Lloyd Webber's music.

Another decided: "It can't match *West Side Story* or *Chorus Line*, because though it tries to be more than a series of charming vignettes, it doesn't really go anywhere." The public ignored the critics and made up its own mind.

The gulf between professional reviewers and public also works the other way around. *City of Angels*, a sophisticated and witty musical about Hollywood life, won enormous critical acclaim when it opened in the West End a few years ago, but the lack of tunes and poignant love story did not endear it to the public.

Such musicals stand in something of a grand tradition. The show pitifully and publicly denounced on its opening by film director Mike Todd with the words: "No Gals, No Gags, No Chance." The show in question was *Oklahoma* which went on to become one of the best-loved musicals of all time,



Wrong note: Tommy was loved by the critics but its West End run ended early. Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* had to be reworked to attract audiences. Photographs: PA

Rave reviews that can lead to death notice

David Lister

Where the critics and the public were at odds

Shows the critics gave a thumbs-down but the public loved:

Cats
Camelot
Les Misérables
Pal Joey
Charlie Girl

Shows the critics loved but the public didn't:

City of Angels
Tommy
Sweeney Todd
She Loves Me
La Cage Aux Folles

Nobel winner may sue over gay baby abortion claim

Steve Boggan
and Glenda Cooper

Independent that women should have the right to abort for any reason, including dyslexia, a genetic lack of musical ability or even being too short to play basketball.

Dr Watson, who with his colleague Francis Crick, discovered the double helix in 1953, said he had been quoted out of context in a *Sunday Telegraph* article headlined: "Abort babies with

gay genes, says Nobel winner." His comments provoked outrage in the gay community and among pro-lifers. However, his justification of them appeared to lead him into more extreme territory.

"During an interview, I was asked about homosexuality and I related a story about a woman who felt her life had been ruined because her son was a ho-

mosexual and she would never have grandchildren," he said. "I simply said that women in that situation should have a choice over whether or not to abort. I didn't say that foetuses found to have a gay gene should be aborted."

But when asked where society should draw the line over abortion, he replied: "Society shouldn't. I think women should

have the right to an abortion if they want one, irrespective of whether there is a disease. I am pro-choice and I believe men and committees should play a part in women's decisions."

"I don't see where you can draw the line. Some people might not want a child who is dyslexic. A woman could say that some day, if a gene were discovered for musical ability,

and her child didn't have it, she might want to abort."

"Some people might say, I do not want my child to be short because I love basketball and he'll be too short to play. There could be 1,000 different reasons and many of them we would consider absurd. But I believe a woman should be able to walk into a clinic for an abortion and not have the state interfere."

Gay rights groups and pro-lifers reacted angrily to Dr Watson's remarks. Nick Partridge of the Terrence Higgins trust described them as "outrageous".

Professor Jack Scarisbrick,

Director of the pro-life charity Life, said the idea was a "horrible suggestion. All abortion is an offence to the right to life of a child and a violation of a mother," he said. "To do this be-

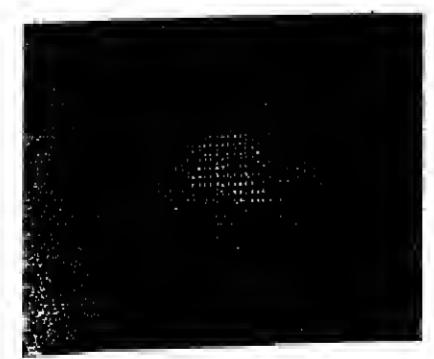
cause an alleged gene is going to result in homophobia is a terrible discrimination."

A spokesman for the Department of Health said that it would not be legal to abort a child on the grounds of future orientation: "Should a gene for homosexuality be identified, this alone could not be used under the Abortion Act to justify abortion".

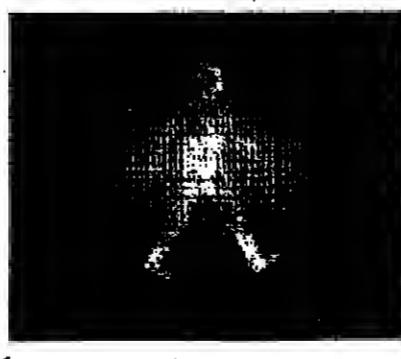
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53 53

SAGA

Business ploughs a green furrow to safeguard national parkland

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

The mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington and the environmentalist Sir Jonathon Porritt are backing a radical green agenda for Britain's national parks involving private funding for energy-saving and landscape-protection schemes, chemical-free farming and reduced car use.

As the parks struggle with budget cuts and a myriad of commercial and people pressures, the Council for National Parks (CNP)—the charity which fought for their establishment nearly 50 years ago—is trying to set a fresh agenda for England and Wales's finest countryside.

It wants the 11 park authorities to work more closely with companies to head off damaging changes and for Whitehall departments to demonstrate their own "duty of care". It also repeats the demand for national park stans for the South Downs and the New Forest.

Sir Chris, the CNP president, stressed the importance of getting across messages which made "links between urban lifestyles and the impacts on

beautiful rural areas". He added that the CNP had been trying to get board-level commitments to national parks.

Sir Jonathan warned that the pressures of modern lifestyles could bring "dramatic and irreversible changes to the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the parks".

Damaging trends identified by the CNP study included power projects, such as hydroelectric schemes in Snowdonia, lines of pylons and even the proliferation of wind turbines; intensive farming and the pollution of water with nitrates; quarrying—particularly of limestone for road aggregates—and Army war games.

The council wants to see the spread of schemes similar to those in the Norfolk Broads, where Anglian Water and the detergent industry are helping fund the UK's largest lake clean-up project; in the Lake District, where North West Water is helping tackle nutrient enrichment; and in Northumberland where Northern Electric is partnering a £40,000 energy-saving scheme.

In the Peak District, electricity companies have spent £1m over



Flying start: Hang-gliding off Mam Tor in the Peak District, where the park authority has negotiated deals with the private sector to help preserve its natural beauty. Photograph: Tom Pistor

the last 15 years on a 50-50 deal with the park to bury power cables underground in areas where pylons would be particularly ugly. Meanwhile water companies are paying half the

salaries of a number of rangers, in exchange for their logo appearing on park vehicles.

Privately, national park officials argue that much of this has

been on their agenda for many

years but point out that companies are keener to offer logo-blazing sponsorship with a good PR pay-back than they are to accept curbs on quarrying and unattractive buildings.

Officials also criticized the council for failing to find new solutions to the problems of coping with the millions of visitors and their cars. Subsidized public transport systems have

been operating in some parks for decades.

The Government estimates that more than 100 million visits are made to national parks each year. But a recent study by

consultants Deloitte & Touche concluded that the annual figure for the Peak District alone could be £1 million—and most travel by car. The Lake District runs the Peak a close second.

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international

Berisha rejects Albanians' demands

Tirana (Reuters) — Furious Albanian investors staged more protests yesterday, ignoring the government's suggestions to shrug off millions of dollars in losses from failed pyramid investment schemes and to get back to work.

Several thousand protesters marched through the southern towns of Fier and Vlora, chanting anti-government slogans and demanding compensation for losses.

In Vlora, where the Gjallica scheme went bust and wiped out the savings of many residents, about 2,000 people carried the picture of a protester who was shot dead last week.

In Fier, another 2,000 people staged a protest, denouncing President Sali Berisha and carrying local opposition Socialist Party leader Petro Koci through the town on their shoulders.

In Tirana, police put on a show of force to ensure a rally called by the main opposition Forum for Democracy yesterday did not take place.

Police vans cruised the area and officers made sure people did not loiter near the football stadium where the rally was due to be held. Officers forced customers in nearby cafés out into the rain to make sure if any of them were potential protesters they would disperse or get wet.

Berisha admitted on Saturday it had been a mistake to use riot police against protesters and said protests would be allowed in Tirana if organisers had a permit.

But Sunday's actions showed the government is still loathe to let demonstrations take place in the capital and was hoping protests in the countryside would diminish.

Mr Berisha said on Saturday that the government had warned the public too late about the dangers of the unregulated schemes. But he said responsibility also lay with those who had put millions of dollars into the high-interest schemes — and lost everything.

He said the state had no intention of reimbursing hundreds of thousands of Albanians who lost their savings and often sold valuables or property to invest in the schemes.

"We will not take this debt on our shoulders. No democratic government would do this. It would be cheating, printing money to pay and creating hyperinflation," he said.

Mr Berisha acknowledged many Albanians were homeless, having sold homes to join a frenzy of investing in the schemes which paid interest of 60 per cent or more a month.

Albania has been swept by demonstrations and riots since five high-risk schemes collapsed last month. Investors blame the government for failing to warn them of the dangers of the schemes, which said they were building tourist resorts, supermarkets and petrol stations but were pocketing the cash.

Bankers estimate \$1 (£600m) to \$2bn may have been poured into the fraudulent schemes.



Pointing the finger: An anti-government protest over the pyramid selling scandal attracted 2,000 people in Fier yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

Tories were warned about crooked regime

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The Conservatives were given repeated warnings about their links with Albania's ruling Democratic Party last year.

Following Commons allegations

of President Sali Berisha, London said yesterday that the Tories were asked to investigate allegations being made about the dictatorial tendencies of his Democratic Party.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have also given assistance to partner parties in Albania, financed by funds from the Westminster Foundation.

But after complaints had been made about last May's Albanian elections, the Foundation obtained copies of reports from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose monitors had witnessed widespread vote rigging and intimidation by President Berisha's party machine.

One Westminster Foundation source said yesterday that after those allegations had been discussed, one Conservative project was approved on con-

diction that the party should log its concerns with President Berisha's party colleagues.

It was also agreed that the Tories should carry out their own investigation into the democratic commitment of the Albanian Democratic Party — before putting forward any further projects requiring Westminster Foundation funding.

In one discussion, a Tory representative said that President Berisha had spoken of his amazement that Labour and

the Liberal Democrats were providing more Westminster Foundation finance for his political opponents than the Conservatives were offering to his party.

The Foundation's governing body decided that the situation should be kept under review with an implicit warning that the Conservatives should be careful if they wished to continue funding a party which had become essentially undemocratic in its nature.

Belgrade threatens freedom of foreign media

Donald Forbes
Reuters

Belgrade — The government warned foreign journalists over their reporting of Serbia's political crisis yesterday as opposition parties girded for a battle with the authorities over press freedom.

The Zajedno (Together) coalition, whose street protests forced the government to recognise its election victories in Serbia's main towns, has threatened to resume demonstrations unless media controls are relaxed by 9 March.

Zajedno leaders believe access to the state media will be crucial to their chances of beating the ruling Socialist Party (SPS) in parliamentary and presidential elections this year.

The warning to foreign journalists by Information Minister Radmila Milenkovic suggests the government will not give ground without a fight.

She told the pro-government daily Politika: "We must especially hold [foreign journalists] responsible for what they write. This means that if they write something which is not factually correct, we should react and demand the untrue be corrected."

Ms Milenkovic, a newly appointed loyalist to President Slobodan Milosevic, added: "In view of the force and influence of the press, the media exert on the shaping of public opinion and government policy, their responsibility is exceptional." In its last crackdown on the foreign media in 1994, at the height of the war in Bosnia, Serbia refused to renew the accreditation of almost 20 foreign journalists.

Although Serbia has no censorship, the main broadcast and print media are under strict state control. Independent radios have limited range and the government restricts the supply of newsprint to independent newspapers and magazines.

The limited reporting by state television on three months of Zajedno and student demonstrations against SPS attempts to rig the local election results was hostile to the opposition.

The opposition called off demonstrations on Saturday but set a new deadline. A Zajedno leader, Zoran Djordjevic, told supporters: "Let us give them a chance to show an intention to free the media and, if they fail to do that by 9 March, what else can we do but go out into the streets again?"

Belgrade students who have also held daily protests said they would continue their demonstrations until the government sacked the university rector and prosecuted those responsible for annulling the local election results.



Catherine Deneuve: Ready to go to jail over new law

French stars join fight against ultra-right

John Lichfield
Paris

Over 400 French actors — including star names such as Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Mio-Mio and Jeanne Moreau — yesterday declared themselves ready to go to jail if the government pursues new curbs on illegal immigrants.

The declaration follows similar petitions from other branches of the French intelligentsia: 58 cinema directors, 300 writers, 300 theatrical figures and 1,200 journalists and lawyers. Three more round robins, threatening deliberately to flout the proposed new law — from doctors, scientists and cartoonists — will be published in *Libération* today.

The ostensible object of the intellectual revolt is a draft law, due to be finalised in the National Assembly next week, which tightens existing restrictions on illegal immigration. In particular, the country's cultural and intellectual élite objects to a clause which would oblige anyone housing a non-touristic, non-European Union foreigner to obtain a certificate from the local authority.

The suggestion is that this would turn France into a nation of informants and snitches of the kind of registrars of Jews which was imposed by the Vichy régime during the Second World War. In fact, most of the provisions in the law have existed for 15 years and were originally introduced, by decree, by a Socialist government

in 1982. The only new requirement is that the host must tell the authorities who his guests leave.

Furthermore, as the Interior Minister, Jean-Louis Débré, pointed out yesterday in the *Journal de Dimanche*, there will be no jail sentence for French people who break the law. They will simply be banned from holding "lodging certificates" in future.

EU citizens and visitors from other countries, such as the US, who require no visa, do not fall under the regulations. The new — and old — laws apply to other foreigners with no right of residence or obvious means of support in France, Mr Débré said. They can only enter if they have a certificate showing that they have somewhere to stay.

Why, then, such a great furor? By

the admission of those organising the protests, they are mostly aimed at the rise of Jean Marie Le Pen's ultra-right and xenophobic Front National, following its victory in Viroflay, near Marseille, last week. It may be true that the intelligentsia should have objected to the immigration laws before now, say the petition organisers. But a half must be called at some time to what they call the creeping "Le Penisation" of French politics. The motivation behind the new law — and the kinds of words used by parliamentarians from the centre-right majority when they made it even tougher in the National Assembly — were pure Front National, the critics say. (The amendments were struck out last week by the upper chamber of parliament, the Senate.)

Mr Débré retorts that the best way to cut the ground from under the FN is to control the illegal immigration which damages the interests of legitimate immigrants and French citizens alike. Other commentators point out that Mr Le Pen will be delighted by the protests: they come from just the social élites which the FN accuses of betraying France.

An uneasy truce may be declared when the law comes back to the national assembly next week. The Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, let it be known yesterday that he would withdraw the offending "lodging" clause. But he also hinted that he expected supporters of his own centre-right government to make an attempt to restore their FN-inspired amendments.

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Civil War Picassos to join 'Guernica'

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

Madrid's modern art museum, the Reina Sofia Art Centre, has bought seven important works by Picasso from the artist's family at a price reckoned to be nearly half their market value, filling an important gap in the museum's collection.

The acquisition of two drawings, two sculptures and three oil paintings covers two years of negotiations during which three big Spanish banks put up the cash for the purchase — £15m — in lieu of paying tax. The

pieces date from the Civil War years of the 1930s and complement Picasso's cry of grief and rage, *Guernica*, jewel of the Reina Sofia's collection.

Claude Picasso, the artist's grandson, said recently that the family was prepared to negotiate the sale of other works to the museum, despite having neither the need nor the inclination to part with any of the enormous quantity of material still in family hands.

Madrid has long felt sore about being last in the queue for important Picassos. The bulk of the artist's work, from his young

and old period, is in the Picasso Museum in Paris or that of Barcelona. The Reina Sofia has tried to fill a gap by acquiring works from the artist's middle years, but recognises it will never be able to match the other collections.

Unusually for Spain, "Operación Picasso" — the Socialists' most ambitious cultural project — survived last year's change in government, and the former culture minister, Carmen Alborch, attended the unveiling last week to remind everyone that it had been her idea. Astonishingly, her co-

servative successor, Esperanza Aguirre, thanked her for the initiative.

The *Guernica* painting itself is at the heart of a tug-of-war between the Reina Sofia and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, a futuristic building by the American architect Frank Gehry, due to open this summer. The Guggenheim wants to borrow Picasso's homage to the bombed Basque village as part of its inaugural exhibition, but the Reina Sofia says the painting is too fragile to be moved. A spokeswoman said this week the museum had received no formal

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international

Handover countdown: As work on the colony's new airport continues apace, China tightens its grip on its territory-in-waiting

Hong Kong turns its back on Rifkind

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, is clearly vexed by his crash-course in the Buddhist art of clapping with a single hand. After his whirlwind weekend visit to Hong Kong it is clear that Britain's hand in the colony is relatively empty, making the visit little more than an embarrassing demonstration of British impotence.

This may be inevitable with just 19 weeks to go before China resumes sovereignty but Britain seems to be caught between stressing its long-term commitment to the territory and demonstrating its inability to achieve many of its last goals.

High on the British agenda is a rearguard action to stop China from watering down human-rights legislation and to prevent the establishment of a rival legislature. Britain has threatened to take China to the International Court of Justice to adjudicate on whether the rival body is legal, but the Chinese have refused, point blank, to go.

Mr Rifkind was repeatedly asked what action Britain would take in the face of this refusal. The Foreign Secretary blustered

and rather uncharacteristically lost his cool. He turned on one Australian journalist, who suggested that Britain was not doing much, saying, "if you have anything else in mind, tell me what you suggest".

A British official later said that it was necessary "to come to terms with the loss of sovereignty and the loss of control". Clearly annoyed that the Foreign Secretary had been accused of not doing enough for Hong Kong, he said that Britain had every intention of fully exercising sovereignty until 30 June but had to be realistic about what levers were at its disposal after that.

Arriving on Saturday evening, Mr Rifkind stated that Hong Kong policy was "the single highest priority of our international relations" – but not of sufficient priority, apparently, to prevent the visit being cut to the bone so that he could fly back to Westminster for a crucial vote this evening.

It may have been just as well he did not stay. A mere eight of the Legislative Council's 60 members bothered to attend a meeting with him, and the press conference, normally packed for a visit of this kind, was only modestly attended by the local media. Tung Chee-hwa, who will head Hong

Kong's first post-colonial government, spent less than a hour in what turned out to be little more than a friendly but stilted chat, with both sides going through the motions. Yet Mr Rifkind insisted that in most points of handover negotiations "not only are we making progress, but most of them have been resolved". He even believed there might be a possibility that China would think again about reintroducing colonial laws which limited freedom of assembly and association.

It was hard to find a basis for Mr Rifkind's confidence. Mr Tung said yesterday that while he was prepared to listen to the public's views on these matters, "I have a set of values and beliefs which I hold on to very much". This seems a polite way of saying that the decisions are irreversible.

Britain's last hope seems to be to play the international card. Mr Rifkind stressed that Britain's allies would be called upon to assist the Government in ensuring that Sino-British agreements on Hong Kong were fully implemented. He said that Hong Kong was one of the first issues he raised with Madeleine Albright when he called to congratulate her on being appointed United States Secretary of State.



Press-ganged: Malcolm Rifkind leaves a news conference in Hong Kong yesterday

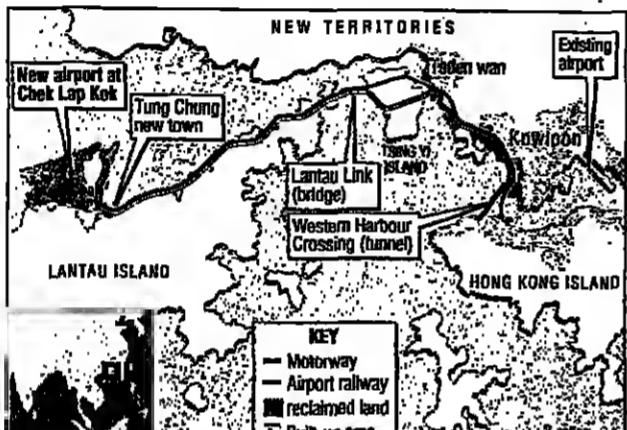
Photograph: Reuters

International lift-off delayed by disagreement and distrust

Stephen Vines

On Thursday morning a small turbo-prop Beech Super King aircraft, loaded with VIPs, will touch down on the uncompleted runway of one of the world's most expensive and politically controversial new airports.

The ceremonial flight is being made to demonstrate that construction of Hong Kong's new international airport is proceeding at a furious pace so that it can open for business by April next year. This is almost a year behind schedule but, unusually for an important infrastructure project, the delay has nothing to do with building problems and everything to do with almost five years of Sino-British wrangling over the financing of the project.



On the ground it does not seem that the airport will be finished in just 14 months. The massive 1,248-hectare site is awash in a sea of mud, broken by the towering shell of a passenger terminal designed to handle 30 million passengers per year. Within 10 to 20 years the airport will be handling 89 million passengers

a year, and 2 million tons of cargo, making it the world's busiest airport. However it will be far from being the largest – it is, for example, about half the size of Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris.

A small army of 21,000 people, speaking a babble of languages, mill around purposefully under the eyes of hundreds of contractors. Only at meal times do the nationalities divide into distinct groups, with the Chinese heading straight for their rice and noodles, the Brits for solid Western stodge, the Indians for curries and the Japanese for their neatly constructed lunch boxes.

The logistics of getting the airport built are daunting. In land-challenged Hong Kong, finding the space was problem number

one. As a consequence a barely inhabited island had to be evacuated, its hills levelled and the debris removed; 10,000 tonnes per second were shifted at the initial site clearance stage.

Because the airport is not on the mainland it had to be linked by a 1,377-metre-long suspension bridge. A new railway and highways are being built and a new town is rising next to the airport which will eventually house some 300,000 people.

The entire project is being built in a six-year time frame. Given the tight programme, no one is taking risks with cutting-edge technology. Only tried and tested methods are being employed.

The airport and its associated projects will cost some £12.5bn, making it one of the

world's largest infrastructure projects. Originally the government envisaged most of the cash allocated so far. British companies come second, with 16 per cent and Chinese companies are in the third place with half this amount. The government insists that contracts were awarded solely on merit.

The Chinese do not believe this. Hence there were endless talks and delays. In 1991 the Prime Minister, John Major, was forced, much against his better judgement, to become the first important Western leader to visit Peking after the Tiananmen Square massacre. The idea was to sign an agreement which would finally break the deadlock.

The Chinese seemed genuinely to believe that the British would use this big project as a way of eating into the coffers and funneling money back to London. But it is hard to argue that the colonial administration has used the airport as a way of rewarding British companies. The lion's share of the business

dangled the carrot of an agreement on the airport.

Even now China is making sure that the airport will not open before British sovereignty over Hong Kong ends. Peking did not want the territory's largest construction project open for business while Britain was running the colony.

The delay also gives China greater scope for running the airport, a delicate subject which is rarely discussed. China may wish to have a Deng Xiaoping Airport, named after the ailing paramount leader, or a Reunification Airport, reflecting the phrase China usually uses when talking about the resumption of its sovereignty in July. Alternatively the mundane Hong Kong International Airport might be retained.

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Mystery of murdered Tibetan guru transcends the merely mortal

Jan McGirk
New Delhi

A wrathful deity is the main suspect for three murders in Dharamsala, the Himalayan "capital" of Tibet's government-in-exile.

But Chinese-hired assassins or thieves have not been ruled out. So-persistent RK Singh, who is investigating the stabbing of Lobsang Gyatso, director of the Buddhist School of Dialectics, and his two pupils, believes the most likely motive may be a rift between mainstream Tibetan Buddhism and a fundamentalist sect which worships the deity

Dorje Shugden. After the Dalai Lama warned his devotees in May against veneration of Shugden, cult followers in Britain and New Delhi launched a campaign against the Tibetan leader. Gyatso, 41, was close to the Dalai Lama, and fulminated against the cult's charges that his pronouncement amounted to religious persecution. Gyatso received death threats over the past nine months, said a spokesman in Dharamsala.

He was found dead on his blood-soaked sofa by a student bringing his son on 4 February. His translators, Lobsang Nagawang and Nagawang Lodoe, sprawled on the floor, were

wounded; they died en route to hospital. Bloody footprints led to a ground-floor room, but the six Tibetans questioned there said a drunken brawl had caused the mayhem.

In New Delhi, six other monks were held, interrogated and freed without charge.

Shugden, a minor deity once worshipped by the Dalai Lama, is often invoked for curses, and traditionally brings wealth to believers. Gyatso said that although worship of Shugden has long been seen to be harmful to the personal safety of His Holiness, the Tibetan establishment could not ban individuals from following their

preferred superstition and could only caution against such practices.

Many Tibetans fear the Chinese, apprehensive about Taiwan inviting the Dalai Lama to visit, are exploiting divisions among his followers. Last year three suspected Chinese spies were arrested in Dharamsala.

"A hired assassin could have killed the director," said Lobsang Temphe, an assistant secretary in Dharamsala.

Security for the Dalai Lama has been stepped up following the crime. "Security is always quite tight," an aide said. Besides rifle-toting Indian policemen and electronic security gates, the Nobel Peace laureate employs his

own armed guards. Bullet-proof cars are being considered for his travel down the mountain.

According to Gareth Sparham, a Canadian scholar, the dispute between the Shugden followers and the Tibetan government-in-exile is as much political as religious.

"Shugden is today a political symbol representing an emerging political party wedded to the idea that the final arbiter of Tibet's destiny should be monks, and that it should champion a fundamentalist version of Tibetan Buddhism as a state religion."

The Dalai Lama must reject Shugden, Dr Sparham said, "in order that his exile government is fair and is seen to be fair amongst the Tibetan population at large."

An Indian travel agent who lives beside the School of Dialectics, where the murders took place, dismissed the various conspiracy theories as Chinese whispers.

"It's all about money. After all, this happened a few days after the director returned from Hong Kong."

Whether the crime was a burglary gone wrong, a politically motivated assassination, or the culmination of a religious feud which spans generations and incarnations, the mountain retreat of Dharamsala is grieving.



Dalai Lama: Caught up in a bitter doctrinal dispute

Shooting heightens Korean tension

Richard Lloyd Parry

The Korean defector crisis took a dramatic twist over the weekend when a North Korean living near Seoul was shot, apparently by agents of his former government.

Police set up roadblocks after the attack on Lee Han Young, a relative of the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il. The attack appeared to be in retaliation


Victim: Lee Han Young, who was seriously wounded

for the defection last week of Hwang Jang Yop, a senior North Korean politician, who is under police protection in the South Korean embassy in Peking.

Mr Lee was shot at close range by two men in the entrance of an apartment building on Saturday. Police said the gun used was a Belgian-made Browning, a standard weapon of North Korean agents. Neighbours who helped Mr Lee said



Alert: South Korean troops hunting the would-be assassins

Photograph: Reuter

for the defector last week of Hwang Jang Yop, a senior North Korean politician, who is under police protection in the South Korean embassy in Peking.

Mr Lee was shot at close range by two men in the entrance of an apartment building on Saturday. Police said the gun used was a Belgian-made Browning, a standard weapon of North Korean agents. Neighbours who helped Mr Lee said

he muttered "Spy, spy" before losing consciousness. Surgeons failed to remove a bullet from his head and last night he was given little chance of surviving.

The South Korean cabinet met to discuss the incident and offered 50m won (£36,750) for information about the assailants. "North Korea has threatened to take hundred-and-thousandfold revenge for the Hwang incident," said the Prime Minister, Lee Soo Sung. "This attack shows the threat is something concrete."

Mr Lee is the nephew of a former wife of Mr Kim, and escaped to South Korea in 1982. He had been under police protection and even had plastic surgery. The attempt on his life will raise anxiety in Seoul about the extent of North Korean infiltration. Since his own attempted defection last Wednesday, Mr Hwang, 73, a member of the North Korean Workers' Party, central committee, is reported to have told South Korean interrogators that Pyongyang has 50,000 active spies in the South.

In Peking, groups of North Koreans continued to loiter outside the South Korean consulate building, where Mr Hwang was spending a fifth day. Pyongyang claims that he was kidnapped and one of its diplomats told reporters in Peking that "if the South uses force to move him to South Korea we will respond with force. We are determined to prevent them from taking him to the South."

Armed Chinese police laid spikes on the road in front of an anti-riot truck mounted with a water cannon.

In Pyongyang, celebrations went ahead for the 55th birthday of Mr Kim; the state media published the eulogies of the "Dear Leader" but made no mention of Mr Hwang's defection. "The Great General Kim Jong Il is trusted absolutely, eternally and fully as if he were god," said the Rodong Shinmun newspaper. "The Korean people regard him as their god because he defends the destiny of the motherland, nation and people."

Celebrations included performances of dances and songs with titles like "Health to the Supreme Commander" and "Defend the Headquarters".

A North Korean diplomat in Peking said: "The Dear Leader is a pillar in our minds."

"Hwang, deep in his mind, will be thinking of this day and we believe he will celebrate it as well."

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Hidden gender

Phil Johnson

Billy Tipton was a Fifties jazzman. Or so he led people to believe. And thereby hangs a play

Billy Tipton was an American jazz saxophonist and piano player who played swing with the big bands of the Thirties and Forties. Though he was a journeyman musician rather than a star soloist, he performed with one of the greatest of all the major bands led by the master trombonist Jack Teagarden. In the Fifties, when big bands could no longer support themselves, Tipton formed his own trio, travelling from his home in Spokane, Washington to play nightclubs throughout the West. For the next 30 years, as a jobbing musician taking whatever work was available, Tipton seemed a typical example of his breed. At least until January 1989, when, aged 74, he died of a stomach ulcer, and an extraordinary secret was revealed. Billy Tipton was a woman.

The news, delivered by the owner of the funeral home, came as something of a shock to his three adopted sons. "He'll always be dad," Tipton's son John Clark was reported as saying. "But I think he should have left something behind for us, something that would have explained the truth." Tipton's widow, Kitty Oakes, who had separated from him 10 years earlier, refused to talk about the mystery beyond saying: "He gave up everything. There were certain rules and regulations in those days if you were going to be a musician."

Tipton, born Wilhelmina rather than William, began his/her masquerade in the Thirties, as a means of furthering a musical career at a time when women were more acceptable as vocalists than instrumentalists. Even so, there were plenty of precedents for successful female jazz musicians: Lil Armstrong and Mary Lou Williams were incorporated into some of the best bands of the time; Teagarden's sister Norma appeared as a piano soloist with her brother's band, and there were all-female orchestras like the Sweethearts of Rhythm and Ira Rae Hutton's Melodears. Whatever, Tipton evidently strapped her breasts as well as her sax for the 50-odd years of her career. While it may not be entirely coincidental that her employer, Jack Teagarden, was a notorious lush, Tipton somehow managed to live life on the road as a man, in a milieu where bandmen would piss out of a coach window as a matter of course.

With the luxury of hindsight, the grainy newsprint photo of Tipton, posed in a publicity still with the trio, that appeared alongside the story of her death in *Time* magazine, now looks like nothing so much as a portrait of a female drag-artist with a JFK haircut and a cheesy grin. The group's drummer, Dick O'Neill, recalled at the time of Tipton's death that some listeners would joke that his employer's baby face and high singing voice seemed too feminine to belong to a man. "But I would almost fight anyone who said that," recalled O'Neill. "I never suspected a thing."

Though the example of Tipton appears to test the credibility of her fellow jazz

musicians to the limit, it also has a bearing on the sexual politics of a genre where the freedom of the music is rarely matched by a corresponding fluidity in matters of sexual orientation. While a number of celebrated jazz musicians have been, and are, gay, coming out has always been a serious matter of breaking the macho code, and consequently a course of action very few have taken.

The Tipton case, which at the time attracted only a couple of columns in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine ("He never went swimming with his three adopted sons" was *Time's* take on the subject), remains perplexing, like a jazz version of the *Martin Guerre* myth with an added gender-bending twist. The son's call for explanation has also been heeded, albeit in a roundabout way. The film director Robert Altman has commissioned a script about the mystery, and *The Slow Drag*, an off-Broadway play based on Tipton's story by the writer Carson Kreitzer, receives its British premiere at Soho's Freedom Theatre this Thursday.

Grant and Humphrey Bogart in *The Big Sleep*, studying how to light a cigarette and bow to stand," she says. "For the purposes of the play, the character bases his outer demeanour on the movies. It's very much about exteriors and struggling to contain the conflict of suppressing the woman within; there's a lot of pain inside, which is symbolised by the stomach ulcer, and which keeps leaking through, like the sense that he is really a woman and how exhausting living that lie is."

In the play, Billy Tipton becomes Johnny Christmas, a kind of Everyman/Everwoman figure. "He dies for our sins," Kreitzer says, "believing that you can't be a woman and love a woman, or that you can't be a woman and play jazz."

Kreitzer deliberately distanced herself

from the details of the Tipton story, she says, in order to use it "as a lens to look at the story of boy meets girl. Sexuality has a lot to do with it, but it is a love story in the end."

To prepare for the part of Tipton/Christmas, the actress Nikki Slade has been spending time looking at old Hollywood movies. "I've been watching Cary

Grant and Humphrey Bogart in *The Big Sleep*, studying how to light a cigarette and bow to stand," she says. "For the purposes of the play, the character bases his outer demeanour on the movies. It's very much about exteriors and struggling to contain the conflict of suppressing the woman within; there's a lot of pain inside, which is symbolised by the stomach ulcer, and which keeps leaking through, like the sense that he is really a woman and how exhausting living that lie is."

Meanwhile, the fragments of the real Billy Tipton story continue to resound within the history of jazz. Born in Oklahoma, she was brought up in Kansas City at exactly the same time as Charlie Parker. Perhaps Wilhelmina participated in the same after-hours cutting sessions that helped born Parker's genius. Or did she disappear because of the twin burdens of her race and her sex? When the secret she had kept for all those years finally exploded in the form of a stomach ulcer, the response seems, in retrospect, rather underwhelming. "Now I know why I couldn't get him to a doctor," her eldest adopted son said on her death. "He had so much to protect and I think he was just tired of keeping the secret." The cheesy JFK grin of the photo remains to mock us all.

'The Slow Drag' is at the Freedom Theatre, Wardour Street, London W1 (0171-734 0122) to 15 March



John Percival

Whatever happened to the laughter?

Dance Push Comes to Shove Royal Ballet, Covent Garden

I suppose that *Push Comes to Shove* must be Twyla Tharp's most popular work, although not her most subtle or inventive. Yoking together two contrasted musical animals (a rag by Joseph Lamb and the Bear Symphony of Haydn), it pokes fun at halftime while exuberantly exploiting its bravura possibilities. The success it enjoyed on its creation in 1976 was caused by the performance Tharp got from Mikhail Barishnikov in the central role: a superb classical dancer plumping unexpectedly, wholeheartedly and with entire success into the world of Americana. Unfortunately, Tetsuo Kumakawa, who takes that role in the Royal Ballet's new production of the work, no Barishnikov, as classicist or clown.

Yes, he can do all the virtuous steps: his pirouettes, in fact, are even more spectacular than the Russian star's were, although without his style or timing. But Barishnikov

made the easy-looking bits in between just as important, whereas Kumakawa cannot do that even if he tries. He gets a bit lost under the bowler hat that provides a running gag, although he handles neatly its repeated snatches and catchings. Kumakawa has other disadvantages, too. For one thing, he seems to have no feeling for jazz, so his attempts at jazzy movement are pathetically perfunctory; for another, if he has a sense of humour, he manages to stop it showing.

Actually, he is not alone in that: whatever happened to

the laughter that used to accompany this ballet? There were only occasional sniggers at Covent Garden on Thursday. Darcey Bussell and Sarah Wilder look miscast in the other two big roles: nice dancers, attractive young women, but without the irony that the more mature and sophisticated originators of the roles brought to the American Ballet Theatre production. All the ABT dancers used facial expression far more, even the supporting ensemble. Perhaps nobody thought to tell the Royal's corps de ballet that their sequences are meant to be a parody.

The dancer who comes

nearest to the real spirit of the ballet is Deborah Bull, briefly featured in the second movement. But as a whole the work needs more wit, sharper timing, and bigger, more sardonic, personalities. Sorry if that sounds like *lèse-majesté*. Luckily, the principals all have vociferous fans to cheer them on who, unless they watch the *Barishnikov* by Tharp video, will not know how much more of a treat they could have been.

The premiere came last on a somewhat bedraggled triple bill; one of those curious Covent Garden evenings when the intervals are longer than the ballets. This was to allow time for assembling and dismantling the hugely cluttered building site that accommodates Kenneth MacMillan's *The Judas Tree*, a tale of friendly neighbourhood whoring, rape, murder and blasphemy. It is nasty and brutal, but not very short.

Before this came a revival of David Bintley's *Consort Lessons*, none too well danced except by Belinda Hatley and Jane Burn as the secondary soloists. For a ballet intended as an exercise in style and exactness, this is hardly good enough.

John Percival

Following the declaration of Liverpool as an independent republic, messages of support flood in from ETA, the Tamil Tigers and Cilla Black. This joke in Andrew Cullen's *Scouse*, encapsulates the play's appeal and its interest exactly: delight in the wit, but a growing unease at its juxtapositions.

Cullen is Cullen's favourite device to exploit the essential strain of Liverpudlian self-mockery. In the hilarious opening scene, the lead character, Tom, working as a tour guide ("it's better than walking the streets"), gets his party melt away from his account of the city's social history as they realise that this is neither the football nor The Beatles tour. As a vignette of Liverpool's present predicament of deprivation, a heroic past cosmetised into a "heritage", and facile romanticism, as well as an introduction to Paul Broughton's magnificent Tom in all his bluster and dignity, this scene could scarcely be bettered.

The succeeding short scenes present a gallery of local types". The zaniest is Andrew Schofield as a flasher who gets his thrills listening to Tesco cashiers call "pricecheck"; and the most familiar is Gaynor Spearin's Tina, the feisty totie. The style is an interesting mix of community theatre steeped in social history, which flourished in the repertory theatre of 30 years ago, and contemporary TV and stand-up.

But as *Scouse* progresses, Cullen works steadily against the comic grain. While we are still willing the Liverpool Republic to further Ruritanian excesses, darker events take hold. Demonstrations turn to disturbance, riot police to parades and death squads; there are punishment beatings and shootings; bombings and then reprisals from the Manchester United Volunteer Force. By

Theatre Scouse Liverpool Everyman

"types". The zaniest is Andrew

now the bathos is not so funny. Tom and his family are increasingly involved in the disturbances, and such has been our sympathy for them, especially for the excellent Kate Fitzgerald as Tom's resolute wife, Kath. It looks as though Cullen is in danger of slipping down a treacherous slope of apogia.

But as the ending makes powerfully clear, it is we who are in danger of losing our moral bearings as we struggle to square our empathy with Tom's family and their descent into terrorism. Such nice people... it couldn't happen here... tell us it isn't true.

Cullen's play is an exaltation and a satire of contemporary Liverpool, angry on the city's behalf and angrier still at the consequences of introversion. It also re-ignites community theatre in Liverpool, a feel-good play that leaves you feeling well, not so good. Which is the best reason *Scouse* must enjoy the success its resounding first night promises.

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For your committed opera director, *Carmen* has often seemed like red rag to a bull. What else is there to say about it, darling? But Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser mercifully avoid the *Carmen* statement in their new Welsh National Opera production, which opened in Cardiff on Saturday. Though not without idiosyncrasies and a certain consciousness theatrically, this is a memorable, text-based staging that gives us the work, not a clutter of post-modern attitudes to it.

All the same, one is conscious that particular decisions have been taken: the decision, for instance, to move the action out of its public arena - to privatise it, one might say. So Morales and friends discourse about non-existent passers-by. Carmen sings her gipsy song to an audience of two, without dancers, and in the last scene the chorus report (with brilliant vitality) on an invisible procession.

It's a *Carmen* of strong, sta-

Opera *Carmen* WNO Cardiff New Theatre

tic set-pieces, rather than the wide-angle and the zoom lens, and it's largely decontextualised: Christian Fenouillet's Seville is a few colour-washed front- and backclothes, some chairs and tables, and several bowls of oranges. Carmen herself, while she goes on about freedom and the call of the wild, is actually confined by civilised items like a chair or a table. José and Micaela duet looking away from each other and kiss embarrassedly, barely brushing cheeks. Carmen and Escamillo croon sentimentally in a pool of soft light in a sea of gloom on an otherwise empty stage.

The real strength of Caurier-Leiser is in their meticulous direction of the singers, and it's a strength rewarded here by a very good cast, singing in at least passable French. Carmen herself, sung with fine poise and lovely dark tone by Sara Fulgoni, is kept life-size - one gypsy among several - which is no way belittles José's obsession, but makes it more personal. Alwyn Mellor's Micaela is an object-lesson in the treatment of pale convention: deliciously well sung, sensitive, precise and just sufficiently aware of the rôle's artificiality. Her aria delivered against the proscenium arch is a perfect idea, discreet and subtle.

Perhaps John Dzusak's wan, jumpish José is not merely a director's image, but the rôle comes to life in his singing, which is beautifully focused. If there's a weakness, it's Bruno Capron's saturnine Escamillo - a curiously laborious, introspective *torero*. But Heather

Lorimer and Annie Faville are striking as Frasquita and Mercedes, and Simon Thorpe and Peter Hoare add real flair to the quintet.

The American conductor Robert Spano directs with crisp authority if not yet thorough command of pit-to-stage ensemble. The slowish tempo he sometimes prefers need sharper ensemble, and the quicker ones want simply to be tidier. But there is no mistaking his musical grasp, which he shares with the whole production.

At the New Theatre, Cardiff, 19, 24 Feb, 1, 7 Mar (0122 878889); Bristol Hippodrome, 11, 14 Mar (0117 622 7486); Birmingham Hippodrome, 18, 21 Mar (0121 622 7486); The Mayflower, Southampton, 25, 27 Mar (01703 711811); Apollo Theatre, Oxford, 1, 4 Apr (01865 244544); Empire Theatre, Liverpool, 8, 11 Apr (0151 709 1555); Grand Theatre, Swansea 15, 18 Apr (01792 475715).

Stephen Walsh

Roseanne Barr the lottery loser of all time

As poor white trash she was America's sweetheart, as rich white trash she ain't

By Daniel Jeffreys

Roseanne Barr has lost her way, and maybe her marbles. At least that's how it seems in this woeful ninth year of *Roseanne*, a show that was once the best on American television.

The producer and star of *Roseanne* has already declared that this will be her last series. So far, the offerings in year nine are so bad that ABC television may pull *Roseanne* in mid-season, an almost unthinkable coup de grace for a show that once occupied the top three of American television through four straight years.

The writers of *Roseanne*, by bowing to the whims of its popular star, have all but ruined the show, allowing Roseanne to win more than \$100m dollars in the lottery. Imagine, the blue-collar Connors with more money than Rockefeller. This absurd dramatic device turned *Roseanne* inside out and removed its heart as well.

Instead of being a clever comedy about trying to be married, with children, on a limited budget, *Roseanne* has served up duff episodes where the show's star has dressed as Xena the warrior princess, and a centrefold. Roseanne's woes are seen in the American press as a betrayal of those who stayed loyal to the show, no matter what its outrageous star did in her excessive overreactions to stardom.

It seems Roseanne Barr, now worth almost a billion dollars, has tired of realism and has turned self-indulgent instead. She is spending this season playing at dressing-up, glamorising her character, upping Roseanne Connor's income and profile, pushing her closer to centre stage. In short, she is forcing the TV character of Roseanne to metamorphose into a close

approximation of the real Roseanne. With character Roseanne looking set to divorce Dan Connor, we can all look forward to an episode where Mrs Connor marries her new chauffeur in a champagne ceremony at the New York Plaza, only to reveal later that her second husband is a cross-dressing lesbian.

What's wrong with that is not the sexual politics, but the spectacle of a Hollywood star turned monomaniac, abusing a much-loved national treasure, her show, just because she can. It's Roseanne as the kid who builds big sandcastles so that she can knock them down.

Admittedly, life can get pretty strange when your job occasionally involves a \$70,000 shopping spree with Mike Tyson, especially if 18 years ago you were a trailer park mom with a hell-for-a-husband. It gets even more weird if, as Roseanne Barr believes, your mind contains at least 22 personalities, the consequence of sexual abuse by a father who behaved like a demon and forced you to leave home prematurely for pregnant life in a battered mobile home.

The puzzle is, why have these psychic forces imploded now? For most of her nine seasons as queen of US television, Roseanne has somehow managed to surmount her chaotic personal life. Roseanne the sitcom remained funny and inventive while the real-life Roseanne kept careening all over the place through her seemingly whacked-out claims of child abuse, a lost-and-found daughter, and the allegedly boimelid tendencies of Tom Arnold. Against all these odds, she retained a finely tuned comic sensibility that kept her show from self-destruction. No more. Roseanne's evil genie is out of the bottle.

It's too bad. Roseanne rocked the TV landscape in a way that's still sending out aftershocks. "It's hard to remember how raw, how rude – how real – Roseanne seemed in the glitz 1980s," says Preston Beckman, a senior executive at NBC television. "Since then, for better or worse, television has come around to Roseanne's view of the world."

"All the other serious sitcom actresses think Roseanne for opening the door for them," says Dorothy Swanson, a New York theatrical agent. "Roseanne has taken a lot of hits, but she changed things for women in television."

Roseanne knows that she has been a revolutionary, thrusting her attitude right in tinseltown's frequently smug face.

"Hollywood is the pipe from hell," she said in November 1995. "The noxious gases come up and affect everyone. They're always trying to put me back in my place. The reason everyone is so scared of me is because I'm not normal. They're appalled at women who look like me, act like me, come from the class I come from, the fact that I'm Jewish. The people out there, they live to pose. I have screaming kids. I'm always yelling at them. I'm a real mom. I'm not Hollywood."

Since Roseanne made those remarks, her looks have changed, plastic surgery shaping her face and stomach into something closer to the Hollywood norm. Doing all that, it's hard to stay focused on a show that worked because it voiced the fears and frustrations of working-class Everywoman – and did so smartly. In the subservient context of situation comedy, *Roseanne* was a hit because it tapped into the audience's desire to see something other than the typical idealised,

upper middle-class television family. The show had parents who screamed and struggled with weight problems.

No one was better suited to this role than Roseanne Barr. She was born one of four kids into a poor Jewish family living among the Mormons in Salt Lake City. In 1968 her life was changed for ever when she was struck by a car and nearly died from internal bleeding. Thereafter Rosey, as her parents called her, seemed to spin out of control, experimenting with a hippie lifestyle and bearing an illegitimate daughter, called Brandi, whom she gave up for adoption. Roseanne also spent several months in a psychiatric hospital. Then came Bill Pentland, a hotel clerk. It was the early 1970s, and the couple lived in a Denver trailer park.

Her sister Geraldine was the force that drove Rosey up on stage. The two women became habitués of the feminist Woman to Woman bookshop and local comedy clubs where Roseanne's profane "domestic goddess" persona was shaped. They formed a 10-year plan that would carry Rosey's battered self to the Johnny Carson show, an HBO Special and *Roseanne*.

It worked, although not for Geraldine Barr. In 1992 she filed an unsuccessful \$70m breach of contract lawsuit against her big sister. The two have not spoken for years, and now Geraldine follows Rosey's turbulent life through the media.

"I'm watching this woman I knew and love," she says. "And all of a sudden she gets her breasts cut off. Then she gets her nose cut off. This is really scary for me to see."

Although not more frightening than Roseanne's sudden accusations of parental sex abuse, published out of the

blue three years ago, which portrayed Mr Barr as a man obsessed with menacing his daughter while holding handfuls of his own excrement.

Whilst Geraldine was leaving Roseanne's life, Tom Arnold, her second husband, was filling the void. The two met when both had problems with substance abuse, and the marriage

ended when Roseanne ran off with her driver/bodyguard while claiming that she thought Arnold was about to kill her.

Hollywood's failure to ostracise Arnold – in fact the reverse happened – has Roseanne especially steamed up. "This town can't stand Tom enough rewards, and the all know what he did," she said last

baby is fine, but there are rumours strong ones, that she and Thomas are finished.

Roseanne says that she has a condition called dissociative identity disorder, which she describes as having a personality that's been "hit with a hammer and smashed, so all the emotions have been separated". The star, in therapy now for five years, says her personalities are so distinct that they have different signatures.

So here we have the most probable explanation of what has happened to *Roseanne*. The show was one of television's icons. There's a Roseanne who only wanted to be just that, the symbol of prime time TV. There's another Roseanne who hates all of that and says so.

"Hollywood is the Night of the Living Death," she remarked last month. "Everyone's afraid here. They're afraid they can't keep what they've got. Everything's built on stilts, including the stilted egos. They're just a bunch of freaks. Even the parties are about work. Nobody has any fun here."

The result of the conflict between these two Roseannes? A decision to deconstruct one of the most successful sitcoms in history, to satirise the Connors' lottery win as a means to mock the show's own foundation and aspirations, to make it a parody of everything that Roseanne fears but also covets.

Roseanne Barr once said that the show has been her most effective form of therapy. On the evidence of this last and final season, it has entered the Gestalt phase. One can only imagine, as Roseanne's real life apparently lurches to another crisis, what the final episode will be like. Watching it may rank up there with stopping to gawk at fatal road accidents.



I didn't kill her. Let me out, or I'll die in prison

Did 'Aunt Flo' walk to her own death? Her 67-year-old niece, convicted of murder, is due for a retrial. By Grania Langdon-Down

Three and a half years ago Sheila Bowler was led from the dock to begin a life sentence for murder, and an education in the drugs and violence of prison life that her comfortable, middle-class world had not prepared her for.

Mrs Bowler, 67, still cannot believe that anyone could think her guilty of killing her late husband's elderly aunt. And she is convinced she will not survive until 2005, her earliest potential release date.

"I have to get out," she says. "I will die if I have to stay in here. I could never take my own life but I will shrivel up and die, or my mind will become distorted. I will not survive another eight and a half years in here."

The daughter of a solicitor, brought up as a strict Methodist, Sheila Bowler was a recently widowed, well-respected music teacher in Rye, East Sussex, when she was arrested in May 1992 and accused of pushing 89-year-old Florence Jackson into the river Brede.

In a mystery worthy of Agatha Christie, the wear and tear on a pair of slippers, an unprepared bed and a missing walking-stick and torch became sinister clues in the absence of any evidence as to how "Aunt Flo" came to be in the river.

It was about 8pm on 13 May 1992 when Mrs Bowler collected Aunt Flo from Greyfriars Residential Home in Winchelsea to take her home for the weekend. Driving down a hill, Mrs Bowler said she felt her steering fail. She stopped the car and found she had a partially flat tyre. As she had no spare wheel, she decided to call for a recovery service from a nearby garage. When she returned to the car about 30 minutes later with the people from the house, Aunt Flo was nowhere to be seen. Mrs Bowler's immediate thought was that she could not have walked far. Thirteen hours later a police helicopter spot-

ted Aunt Flo's body lying in the water, 650 yards away from the car. The police appear to have fastened on Mrs Bowler as a suspect fairly early on. Her abrasive manner and refusal to give way to emotion – which friends say hide a heart of gold – clearly antagonised those searching for answers.

A look at Aunt Flo's will provided a motive – to stop the £25 weekly cost of keeping her in a residential home haemorrhaging away the value of Aunt Flo's flat, which Mrs Bowler was due to inherit. But proving their case – that Mrs Bowler had driven her aunt to a pumping station beside the river Brede, where she pushed her into the water before driving back to the road and deflating her tyre – was more problematic.

There was no forensic evidence to link Mrs Bowler with the river bank or with the injuries her aunt had sustained. There were no tyre marks or footprints, and no blood or mud was found on Mrs Bowler's clothes.

However, officers returning to Mrs Bowler's home found that there was no bed made up for Aunt Flo – either because she knew her aunt would not be coming back or, because, as Mrs Bowler says testily, she did not know whether her aunt would manage to get up the stairs or would need a bed downstairs.

The walking-stick and torch that Mrs Bowler said were missing from the car were never found – because they were washed away by the river, or because they never existed?

The police did consider the possibility that Aunt Flo's death was an accident – they sent someone shuffling down the road in similar slippers to see whether anything could be proved from the wear and tear on the real slipper found on the riverbank – but they discovered nothing conclusive.

However, at Mrs Bowler's trial in July 1993, her defence team did not

seek to argue that Aunt Flo's death was accidental. Instead, they set about demolishing the prosecution case with great effect, arguing midway through the trial that there was no case to answer. In the absence of the jury, the trial judge, Mr Justice Garland, agreed that every plank of direct evidence against Mrs Bowler had collapsed. But, in a crucial decision, he ruled that the jury was still entitled to ask: "If not the defendant, then who?" Since there was no evidence of anyone else's involvement, and since it was widely accepted that Aunt Flo could not have made the fatal journey by herself, the jury came to the understandable conclusion that Mrs

Bowler must have been guilty. After the trial, her friends and family, including her son Simon, 30, and daughter Jane, 27, were desperate. They dismissed the so-called motive for murder as senseless. At the trial, Aunt Flo's flat in Rye had been sold to her worth £30,000. But it was dark and dingy, and sold recently at auction for only £18,000.

Mrs Bowler, on the other hand, was comfortably off. The mortgage on her £150,000 family home had been paid off 12 years earlier. She had an income of about £17,000 a year, including a teaching salary and pension, and she had about £15,000 in investments.

The one glimmer of hope is that

her case, which is now being considered by the Home Office minister, Timothy Kirkhope, will be referred back to the Court of Appeal, even if it means facing a retrial. Her case could be one of the last to be decided before responsibility for investigating alleged miscarriages is handed over to the new Criminal Cases Review Commission on 31 March.

It is inconceivable that she would have committed such a cruel and callous murder on the eve of Jane's final music degree examination.

But gut feelings are not enough to persuade the Court of Appeal to overturn a verdict: there must be fresh evidence, or the trial judge must have erred in law when summing up the case.

The Channel 4 series *Trial and Error* became interested in Mrs Bowler's case and ran the first of two programmes on it in September 1994. It came up with what seemed the obvious answer – that Aunt Flo, like many occupants of old people's homes, was much more mobile than had been imagined. She was also on

diuretics and was terrified of being left alone – cause enough to make her struggle out of the car and shuffle along the road to her death.

But in May 1995, the Court of Appeal decided that the expert geriatrics evidence put before them was theoretical and they preferred the evidence of the people looking after her – and of Mrs Bowler herself – that Aunt Flo could not have walked any distance on her own.

However, her barrister David Martin-Sperry said there was no evidence that her carers were medically qualified, while Mrs Bowler's insistence that her aunt could not have walked far should have been considered from a psychological viewpoint and not taken as her instructions on the issue: "When she said, on finding out her aunt was dead, she couldn't have walked", it was wishful thinking. Mrs Bowler did not want her to have walked, which would have meant living with the responsibility of not having looked after her properly. Furthermore, by saying that, she was cutting off her sole line of escape. That is not the behaviour of a guilty defendant.

Meanwhile, Mrs Bowler's legal team has been working on new lines of medical evidence to support the theory that Aunt Flo's death was an accident, as well as gathering more expert geriatrics evidence backed by case histories highlighting the often surprising mobility of elderly people. For Mrs Bowler, focusing on the problems of her fellow inmates in Holloway is her way of keeping a grip on her own fears. Her health has suffered. She had a slight stroke last year while being held in Bulwark Hall in Essex. "If I get out, there may be people who will still believe I was responsible for her death and will shun me, but I will just ignore them," she says. "Jane said I should not go back to Rye, with all the gossip, but it is still my home."



Sheila Bowler (left, with her husband and daughter Jane), stood to gain nothing from the death of her husband's aunt Florence Jackson (above, in 1983)

Expand Nato and pull Russia in from the cold

The "most powerful woman in the world" arrives in London tomorrow to shake John Major's hand before heading to Moscow. Last time Maria Jana Korbel was here she was an eight-year-old girl, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague. Now she is called Madeleine Albright, and she is the first woman US Secretary of State. After making a rapid recovery from the shock of discovering two weeks ago that her family was Jewish rather than Roman Catholic, she is on an inaugural whirlwind tour of her bailiwick - the world.

The most important issue she faces is tension between Nato and Russia. This is a greater immediate threat to global security even than the long-term issues of water shortage, population growth and global warming. Whatever its troubles, Russia is still a nuclear-armed power which is heir to 85 per cent of the military strength of the Soviet Union and still dominates the Eurasian landmass. Nato is planning to enlarge to the east. This upsets the Russians.

The United States, with Britain in tow, wants Nato to embrace the new democracies of central Europe. Mrs Albright is the personification of the forces operating on American politics. One of the candidate members is her homeland, the Czech Republic. The other likely candidates, Hungary and

Poland, also have powerful advocates among the immigrant communities of America. So Mrs Albright wants the next Nato summit in July to issue formal invitations to these three countries to join the 16-nation North Atlantic alliance. If that happens, they are expected to become members on or before 4 April 1999, Nato's 50th anniversary.

Russia does not like it. Jacques Chirac, who talks to Mrs Albright today, urges caution. So is Nato enlargement a good idea? Before we answer that question, we have to ask a more basic one: What is Nato for?

Nato is a military alliance and a highly successful one - it won the cold war. When the Soviet Union broke up, so did the Warsaw Pact alliance, Russia's *cordon sanitaire*. There would have been a certain logic in Nato disappearing as well. But instead, former members of the Warsaw Pact wanted to join Nato and Nato agreed that they should.

The motives on both sides were obvious. The central Europeans saw Nato membership as another credit card that free capitalist democracies carried in their wallets. They really want to join the European Union, but that is more complicated and will take longer. Admission to Nato is seen as a first step. Nato itself, meanwhile, was an institution in search of a role. And there is some evidence that,

since the end of the cold war, it could serve a purpose. It has a formal role in Bosnia, and even though the Gulf war was outside its area, Nato membership meant America's allies talked the same language and used compatible equipment and procedures.

But, equally, the Russians have good reason to regard Nato expansion as a threat. The war of words became heated last week when Russian officials reiterated Moscow's 1993 Military Doctrine, that it might use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack.

So, is the rush towards Nato's

expansion premature? The first thing to be said is that there are real obstacles in the way, even if the US thinks it can use its diplomatic muscle to push them aside. Nato enlargement has to be ratified by the legislature of all 16 Nato members, including two-thirds of the US Senate. Turkey has already threatened to refuse to ratify new members' accession if its ambitions to join the European Union are frustrated, as they will continue to be.

There are important questions about whether the Czech, Polish and Hungarian armed forces are ready to be integrated into Nato systems.

But Nato enlargement is not just about matters military. The candidate members know that. And the US sees it that way, too. A senior US diplomat earlier this month said he saw Nato enlargement as a "second hit at the apple", trying to complete the 1947 Marshall Plan, extending post-war reconstruction to the countries frozen out by Stalin.

However, the Prime Minister should warn Mrs Albright that this laudable aim should not be pursued to the extent of freezing Russia out. If Nato does have a role in the post-cold-war world, it should be to help co-ordinate responses to all threats to the rule of international law. If that is the aim, then present plans for expansion are potentially dangerous because they are too modest, in that they do not include Russia and other nuclear powers.

The argument against more ambitious expansion is that it would weaken it by making Nato too diffuse. But Nato was always diffuse. Its guarantee spanned the Atlantic, linking North America and Europe, and the promise that an attack on one would be regarded as an attack on all applied to all members, including Belgium and Iceland. It always had members who were militarily weaker than others - notably Greece and Turkey. But their membership was important for political and strategic

reasons. The principle of common security bound the members together. On that basis, Nato enlargement should go ahead. But - and this is becoming bigger - it must be accompanied by a firm agreement which pulls Russia in from the cold and binds it firmly into the European security system.

Mobile menace to society

That Norman Lamont had the right idea. He just didn't go far enough. Instead of putting a tax on mobile phones, he should have banned them altogether. Some aerials for them are apparently being disguised as giant plastic trees in rural areas. And today we report that masts are being installed on school roofs at £4,000 a throw - a bizarre way to attract private sector funding into the education system. A teachers' union doesn't like them because they use invisible rays and their members have to let in jobsworths in overalls to service them. We don't like them because they make it easier for people to pollute public places with private conversations. "Hello? I'm on the train. I'm going to be five minutes late..."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Liberty and illusion in the war on drugs

Sir: Two correspondents (letters, 15 February) present respectable and valid arguments for an alternative approach to the "war on drugs". Surely the most important point to be considered is individual freedom.

As John Stuart Mill put it in his seminal work *On Liberty*, first published in 1859: "The only purpose for which power can be rightly exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant... Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."

In the National Drugs Campaign Survey commissioned by the Health Education Authority in 1995-1996, 45 per cent of all those questioned said that they had taken at least one of the listed drugs, and 54 per cent of 20-22-year-olds said they had taken cannabis at some time. Just how many people need to break a law before it is repealed? ROBIN PRIOR
Burham, Buckinghamshire

Sir: Your review of the report *Tackling Local Drug Markets* ("Intriguing the reality", 13 February) highlighted the wide availability of drugs on the streets of London, including methadone.

Methadone has come to be regarded as a cheap and easy option in working with drug users. In parts of London and other areas it is now far easier to get a methadone prescription than access to drug-free treatment.

Deaths from methadone overdose now outstrip those from heroin, and apas' agencies are seeing increasing numbers of clients who have become addicted to methadone purchased on the illegal drugs scene.

Methadone is a palliative measure which does not address the real issues behind the drug use. While accepting that methadone has a role to play, more emphasis must be placed upon the ultimate goal of treatment, which is to motivate and encourage drug users to become abstinent.

PETER MARTIN
Chief Executive, apa Community Drug & Alcohol Initiatives
London EC1

Sir: We have a duty to the children of our country not to encourage escapism (letters, 13 February). The real abilities to deal with life's problems and insecurities come from within ourselves, from our own ability to live in reality, to face our problems.

If there is a "high" to be had, it will be one of our own making in the feeling of self-esteem that we will have and the happiness and contentment from learning about integrity, social skills and living life fully aware, with feelings and emotions real - not the drug-induced, worthless illusion that we are something we are not.

STEPHEN GILHOOLY
London SE27



Major mixed up about history

Sir: If the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom really thinks that resurrecting the Scottish Parliament will "destroy a thousand years of British history" ("Major launches crusade to save constitution", 15 February), should oot his Scottish Secretary remind him that there has been a British Parliament only since 1707, and that 290 years is a significantly shorter period than the 410 or more years for which the separate Scottish Parliament had previously existed?

And as far as England is concerned, our last thousand years started with this country about to become successively part of a Scandinavian empire and of Norman and Angevin empires - and more recently we shared Henry VI with France, William III with the Netherlands, and George I, II, III, and IV with Hanover.

ERIC THOMPSON
London, NW2

Sir: The West Lothian question is certainly a problem to be addressed by pro-devolutionists (letters, 14 February). However, it only becomes an insuperable stumbling-block to those determined to make it so.

There are several examples abroad of democracies giving a special degree of autonomy to regions whose representatives in the national parliament are not restricted as to their voting rights: Denmark (Greenland and The Faroe Islands); Finland (the Åland Islands); Spain (Catalonia and the Basque region); Italy (Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige); not to mention the United Kingdom (the

Scientists must answer for BSE

Sir: Nicholas Schoon asks "Who deserves censure for BSE?" (14 February) and answers by commenting correctly that six agriculture ministers did too little and too late.

But the Ministry of Agriculture (Maff) scientists who advise the politicians are also to blame. The macabre and unbiological feeding of dead sheep to our cattle began after the last war. Many of the sheep were, of course, infected with scrapie and as their brains - the infective tissue - were still *in situ* the then government vets insisted that the agreed industry follow strict guidelines designed to protect cattle from this almost indestructible organism.

These guidelines included the use of fat-solvents in the recycling process: the mammalian brain is very fatty and thus manoeuvrable ensured that brain tissue, complete with the infective organism, did not get into the cattle feed.

However, in 1981 it was decided, in the name of deregulation, that the agreed industry should no longer be shackled by guidelines and so they were relaxed. The Maff scientists, who presumably knew all about the scrapie agent, failed to intervene. In 1985 the first cow went down with BSE and by the end of 1986 Maff knew that six cows on three farms had died of it.

They did not then ban the feed (why not?); on the contrary, farmers all over the UK were

encouraged to buy these new high-protein rations.

And the Maff politicians instructed their own vets that they would face dismissal if they published their interesting scientific papers on the subject or went around talking about a scrapie-like illness now in cattle.

H.C. GRANT
London NW3

The author is a neuropathologist

Sir: You are quite right to point out that intensive farming methods are threatening both our environment and our health (leading article, 14 February).

The world's livestock herds are accelerating erosion and desertification as vast areas of forest are cleared and used for grazing cattle. In the United States alone, 85 per cent of topsoil loss is attributed to livestock ranching.

In addition an average 25 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of wheat, but 2,500 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of meat. As your newspaper recently pointed out, there is a world shortage of water.

An acre of cereal can produce five times more protein than an acre devoted to meat production; and legumes (beans, lentils, peas) can produce 10 times as much. Thus the greater the human consumption of animal products, the fewer people can be fed.

Intensive farming is bad for humans, bad for the environment and bad for animals.

J. LINDLEY
Birmingham

Plenty of cod in other waters

Sir: Following your report (6 February) on the threat to cod stocks in the North Sea, I felt it important, on behalf of the UK fish processing industry, to point out that Britain does not face an imminent cod shortage.

Current scientific evidence does suggest that there is cause for concern about North Sea fish stocks - and it seems that some tough decisions will need to be made about reduction of fishing effort in order to maintain a thriving British fishery for the future.

However, consumers should be misled into believing that this news means the imminent collapse of cod supply to the British market.

Britain consumes 25 per cent of the entire world cod catch but only 5 per cent of the total is sourced from the endangered North Sea fishery. The majority comes from well-managed, sustainable fisheries such as the Baltic and Barents Sea, where quotas are actually being increased.

We would do much to safeguard our own fishing industry by learning some of the lessons taught by these fisheries.

ANDREW THOMAS
Chief Executive
Booker Fish Division
Grimsby, Humberside

A letter on defence policy by Colm O'Neill, of London SW1, published on 12 February, was mistakenly attributed to Ken O'Neill, his father, from whose fax machine it was sent.

No knots for us

Sir: So children will be assessed on whether they can tie their shoe-laces when they start school (report, 12 February)? What nonsense! Four- and five-year-olds have wonderful shoes which depend on Velcro and buckles these days. I have no intention of teaching my son to do laces until he is six, when he will pick it up very quickly.

DINAH ROBERTSON
Lynn, Cheshire

Doppelgänger?

Sir: John Welsh states (February 15) that Isabelle Huppert has never appeared on stage at the National Theatre. Last year I played there in *Mary Stuart*, which starred a woman doing a quite astonishingly convincing impersonation of her. I wonder who it can have been.

CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL
London N16

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Now art thieves aren't Raffles but riff-raff

Criminals who specialise in national treasures are likely to be common gangsters who have done their homework, says Jojo Moyes

In Hitchcock's 1955 classic, *To Catch a Thief*, Cary Grant plays the romantic role of the cat burglar, that sophisticate among criminals whom even Grace Kelly cannot resist. Yet apart from a handful of recent cases, including one where the stolen goods were recovered from a string of exclusive addresses, the days of the Raffles-type thief seem largely to be over.

Because according to experts, in the modern world of art crime, you are more likely to be talking of characters such as the Dublin criminal Martin "The General" Cahill, or the purported UVF member "Half Track Mullan" than of aristocratic gentlemen thieves.

There are two common myths surrounding the art thief, says Charles Hill, former head of Scotland Yard's arts and antiques squad - that he is aristocratic, and that he is stealing to order for a "Dr No" figure, complete with secret hoard of priceless objets d'art. "They're not Raffles-type climbers with a box of chocolates. They're social climbing crooks. They're commodities criminals, whether it's drugs, securities or works of art. They start by stealing cars as teenagers, and then embark on their criminal career path."

He cites the example of Cahill, who graduated from domestic burglaries and stealing hire plant equipment, working towards his aim of becoming a major drug distributor. In May 1986 he organised a burglary at the home of Lord and Lady Beit, whose private art collection is considered to be one of the greatest of the 20th century. The paintings were to raise money for the drugs venture.

Cahill, who is described by Hill as "unsophisticated but cunning and persistent", used one of the paintings as collateral in a bank in Luxembourg. In 1993 he sent another to Istanbul in the care of a one-legged Scotsman known as Half Track Mullan, who was subsequently arrested attempting to swap it for heroin. Cahill was later shot dead by the IRA.

In the booming art theft industry, according to Hill, it is like Cahill who are now the rule, rather than the exception. "Within their network the guy that steals the most valuable pictures is much more highly regarded than those who steal hub-caps. That's the pecking order of the criminal mind," Mr Hill says. "They do boast of what they've done to each other. It puts you above the guy who steals the JCB. It's straightforward one-upmanship out of Stephen Potter."

This is reiterated by Peter Scott, who was once known as "the human fly" as a result of his spectacular career as a cat burglar, during which he stole an estimated £30m worth of paintings and jewellery. Mr Scott, a former public schoolboy who has stolen from, among others, Lauren Bacall, John Aspinall and Elizabeth Taylor, considers himself far removed from the perpetrators of petty or violent crime.

"I always had my own particular standards. I could hack stealing from the very rich ... but I couldn't be too happy on acts of violence or stealing property from people who couldn't afford it," he says. Stealing art, he feels, was different. It was a vocation that required intricate planning and knowledge. "I had a lot of passion for what I did. It was more important than anything, even more than my wives. It was the ultimate orgasm," says Mr Scott, who now works as a tennis coach.

He would watch four or five country houses, as well as a couple of town houses, at any one time. He also swotted up. "I know a bit about art. You do your research and eventually you know who has what. I would only really steal paintings when they were wanted by someone. Some paintings are a bit like currency. Hunting pictures and horse pictures by people like Stubbs or Ferneley are very popular. In fact, be said, they were so desirable to some members of the criminal fra-

ternity that they would "take a chance" and hang their plunder on their own walls.

"I had a pal that did an armed robbery many years ago from a country house in Bristol. He put one of these paintings up on his wall. Twelve years later he had guests round to dinner that recognised it. He got seven years."

Mr Scott, who subsequently wrote a book about his experiences, was as famous during the Fifties for his social exploits as for his criminal ones. "The fact that I was a rampant cat burglar did attract some silly upper-class girls," he concedes. But he says he was never the Raffles character the newspapers of the time made him out to be. "I was in Groucho's last night with John McVicar and I said to him, you can start believing in your own bullshit."

Mr Scott believes he may have been the last of a dying breed. "Not many people are prepared to go into a country house on their own," he says. "It's all gangs now. Substances have become the easier way for young people to get rich."

The world of the gentleman thief has passed, he says, because of the increasing sophistication of security devices. "You can't really climb about on roofs and ledges today because of the cameras. You look at houses in The Boltons, Grosvenor Square, they're all camera'd up."

However, according to Colin Norville-Read of *Trace* magazine, a register of stolen art and antiquities, the new breed of art thief is matching those devices for ingenuity. The gentleman player is being replaced by the professional. He may not know about art, but he is well aware of the market and the "business opportunities" within it.

The level of planning always surprises us. They go in there with little slide rules stuck up their sleeves. One chap went into a country house museum with a walking stick with notches in the side marking the centimetres, so he could note exactly where the infrared sensors were. We've even had people who wear socks which have stripes on for monitoring infrared sensors."

The new breed of thief, he says, is more business oriented. "You might have people stealing for order. For instance the big business this year was garden statuary ... 17th-century urns, fountains - some of them are worth as much as £10,000. Country house museums are now so tight with CCTV security that if [thieves] wanted to make money they had to adapt, to move location. So now they come into the garden with cranes."

In one recent unpublished case, a museum that had installed £200,000-worth of American infrared security equipment suffered a burglary after the thief slipped up 50ft of drapery covered with razor-wire. He simply wore kneecaps assuming correctly, that no one would think to safeguard that window. "It's a terrible thing to say, but if someone really wants a particular piece there's not a lot you can do," says Mr Norville-Read.

The audacity of art thieves is still something that raises them a couple of notches above the procurer of drugs or stealer of hub-caps. Mr Norville-Read tells of one incident where a thief had walked around a stately home as a tourist and selected a picture with a large gilt frame of "something like a Gainsborough woman with a horse". The thief later returned and stole it, substituting a cheap poster copy of a woman and horse within a cheap gilt frame. Nobody noticed for several weeks.

"Bond Street is full of crooks," says Peter Scott. "It's littered with them." His tone is vaguely disapproving. Still, as with the best criminal logic, what goes around comes around, as he himself discovered last week. "Someone just stole the hub-caps from my Ford Ghia," he says. "I hope he's enjoying them."



When the cat burglar was a gent:
Cary Grant with Grace Kelly in
'To Catch a Thief'



Britain booms as the health service ails

by Polly Toynbee

Boom! There it goes, up, up and away, a great gossamer diaphanous balloon full of hot air. Feeling good? Never had it so good, at least not since 1986. Oh, happy days are here again. So how does it feel to be plumb in the middle of the boom? Can you sniff it in the air? Does it smell of Greenwich and Jean-Paul Gauffier? Hear the music of cash registers, the zip of credit cards whizzing through the slots. Does it ripple like Issey Miyake pleats over the skin? Or slide down the throat like a filament of roasted red pepper with goats' cheese, cibatta and rocket?

You want to fly to Egypt over Easter? Forget it. Egypt is full. Watch the star-studded openings of shimmering chic restaurants, see the queues for tables spill out on to the pavements from Clapham High Street to Camden Town. MPs grumble that you can't get a decent table near Westminster for love or lots of money. (Boom talk is London talk.)

No, no, says the Chancellor. What boom? Only sustained and sustainable steady growth. It will last for ever! This time is different. Yet, from the bounce in his *Hush Puppies*, there is boom in the Chancellor's every step. The only difference this time is that no one thanks him for it - it's the feel-good-not-thanks-to-you boom. When will the balloon come down? Just before the next election.

Dear children, you who are too young to remember a decade ago, a word or two of warning. We have been here before - it does not last. Our mediocre growth rate has been static at less than 2.5 per cent since 1850. Even the little booms and busts, that's what you get. As ever, the politicians eagerly mistake a cyclical upturn for permanent bliss - growth at 4 to 5 per cent from now on. But what goes up must come down.

The South-east housing market is puffing fit to burst. Knight

Frank say that demand so far exceeds supply in the home counties that properties don't even reach their notice-boards; they are sold within hours. No more negative equity by the end of this year: we have lift-off, (except for those wretches already repossessed). Manors, waterside, top of the range, there aren't enough country houses to go round. A three-bedroom country house at £350,000 last week drew so many enquiries that the vendors demanded best-and-final offers in sealed bids and got an extra £15,000. "We haven't had

sealed bids in years," say the agents. Savills tell their buyers these prices will rise by 50 per cent by the millennium.

Ian Christie, of the Henley Centre for Forecasting, says none of the overall figures tell the story. "Averages are meaningless. This is the winner-takes-all economy. Consumer confidence? Everyone knows it's a risk economy now, it's just a matter of 'how lucky do you feel?' Even the winners fear becoming the next downturn's losers."

"Cool Britannia" said *Time* magazine's cover, extolling the triumph of boozing Brit culture - the Sixties all over again: for Beatles, Bridget Riley and Carnaby Street read Oasis, Damien Hirst and Galliano. This issue of *Vanity Fair*'s front cover has joined the stampede. Boozing, they say, it's money from the Lottery flowing into the arts, it's the Eurostar train, the relaxation of archaic licensing laws, London, nerve centre of pop, clothes, movie-making and gastronomy. Even Tony Blair is cool. (What?)

I sit on the Northern Line reading all this, frankly embarr-

assed to be seen reading it as bored passengers glare over my shoulder. We are stuck for 35 minutes in the tunnel, then slowly, slowly we inch past filthy, peeling stations, tempests fraying, pulses racing. Cool, hub? I can see Oval station might make a hip backdrop for a sultry anorexic modelling a Vivienne Westwood, or maybe the Spice Girls could strut their scrawny little belly-buttons on the grungy Kennington platform. Cool.

What is the story? The same old story as last time. More private squandering, more public

has signed his name in blood to plans for such minuscule growth that it faces calamity never before witnessed: by 1999 the NHS will be £5bn short. If it is allowed to fall so far behind, it will never catch up because by then to get back to where the NHS is now would take a hike of 3p on income tax, which no chancellor will ever sanction. The "we" who couldn't afford it will find ourselves paying a lot more for private health insurance to cover the shortfall.

Raising the alarm in a recent brilliant *Analysis* programme on Radio 4, Andrew Dilnot of the Institute of Fiscal Studies reminds us that how much we spend on the NHS is a matter of choice, not an economic law. Affordability is in the eye of the voter. But who will alert the voter that both parties are knowingly signed up to an NHS-killing budget?

Remember Gordon Brown's words: "I've an iron commitment to stability in public finances ... our programme requires no new spending ... and I can confirm also that we will be making no new commitments in our manifesto which require additional spending." Let us pray that he is lying through his teeth. In the meantime, boomers, enjoy!

A word of warning, children. We have been here before. It does not last

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obituaries / gazette

Phil Hyams

Phil Hyams was the last of the great showmen responsible for Britain's most spectacular cinemas. He was a flamboyant figure who loved the limelight – impulsive, temperamental, but likeable and fair-minded. He often worked by "hunches" and his hunches were rarely wrong.

Assisted by his younger brothers Sid and Mick, he put buildings of eye-popping grandeur in reach of the working classes in some of London's dreariest suburbs. The Hyams' greatest undertaking was the State at Kilburn, north London, on a three-and-a-half-acre site. The largest of all English cinemas with 4,004 seats and a tower visible for miles around, it survives as a bingo club. The Hyams also promoted the Troxy in Commercial Road, Stepney, resplendently brought back to life for bingo in 1992 after three decades of decay.

The Hyams' father – a Russian immigrant baker in the East End of London – had helped finance the new Popular cinema in Commercial Road, Stepney, in 1912 and his teenage son Phil worked there in the evenings to learn the business. Joined in 1919 by the quieter, more reflective Sid, Phil built up a small circuit that included the Canterbury in Westminster Bridge Road. He claimed that the years he spent in the early 1920s reviving the fortunes of this former music hall were the happiest of his life.

In 1927 the Hyams converted a vast transited into their first super cinema: the Broadway at Stratford, east London (no longer standing). Thanks to a versatile and gifted architect, George Coles, the auditorium looked palatial, and Coles went on to design all the cinemas the Hyams founded. Phil demonstrated his flair for showmanship when he learned that the Prince of Wales was a keen supporter of British Legion events and offered the Broadway free for a

huge rally just before the official opening. The Prince obligingly attended and no new cinema ever had more national publicity.

In 1928, the Hyams sold their circuit to the newly formed Gaumont British combine, then started afresh as H&G Kinemas in partnership with Major A.J. Gale. Three live elephants appeared at the 1930 opening night of the Elephant and Castle Trocadero – externally ponderous, it boasted a sumptuous 3,500-seat auditorium with elaborate Renaissance decoration and an atmosphere of magical expectation that never faded. The Troxy Stepney followed in 1933, of equal size, but in the art deco mode. (There was also the Trocadero Bermondsey, an existing cinema taken over and renamed.)

The Hyams' philosophy was "If you give 'em value for money, they'll come", and their cine-variety shows were legendary: not just two films, a newsreel and organ interlude, but huge variety halls featuring top artists of the day. "Mr Phil", and "Mr Sid" (as the Hyams were known to all) were unusually generous employers: at the end of a good week, staff would often find a bonus in their pay-packets.

The cinemas also featured amateur talent contests. One night at the Trocadero, Phil went to the rescue of a hapless young singer who was being mercilessly barracked. He persuaded the audience to give her a chance, recalling another terrified novice who had received a fair hearing – Gracie Fields. His story was, he readily confessed off-stage, "a pack of lies".

The Hyams linked with Gaumont in 1935 to expand further, forming Gaumont Super cinemas. Brother Mick was on board as theatre controller. At Kilburn, their long-gestating Troxy had become the Gaumont State when it opened at Christmas 1937. Here a modern skyscraper tower with full broadcasting facilities rose above an entrance hall in Italian Renaissance style with marble floors and columns, pink mirrors, and two chandeliers modelled on those in the banqueting hall at Buckingham Palace. It was a place fit for royalty and in fact Queen Mary regularly came to programmes in the 1940s.

The State's vast auditorium continued the classical theme but in a less elaborate, less overwhelming style than at the Trocadero. The huge stage, or-



The Gaumont State, Kilburn, the largest of all English cinemas when the Hyams opened it in 1937

chestra pit, Wurlitzer organ, twenty dressing rooms, band room and scenery workshop were all put to use for frequent live shows over the years – from ballet and circuses to pantomime and pop concerts.

This was the Hyams' last great venture. With war imminent, they worried about their concentration of inner London properties and sold off project at Holloway and Kingston-on-Thames.

The Blitz did indeed have a devastating effect. Audiences were scared to enter the Trocadero and State at the height of the bombing and they were closed for several weeks to save money. The Hyams sold out to Gaumont in 1944, just before the post-war boom in atten-

dances made goldmines out of their huge theatres.

In 1947 the Hyams launched a distribution company called Eros Films. This reissued hundreds of old Hollywood favourites like *Beau Geste* and *The Road to Singapore* and also backed new films by British producers, ranging from the Frankie Howerd comedy *The Runaway Bus* (1953) and the star-laden war drama *The Sea Shall Not Have Them* (1954) to exploitative material like the Soho vice drama *The Flesh Is Weak* (1957) plus Cliff Richard's screen debut in *Serious Charge* (1959). Old music halls at Croydon and Lewisham were turned into Eros cinemas.

By the late 1970s, the Hyams were left with only the Biograph

in Wilton Road, Victoria, an old fleapit which they had never been able to sell and which, in the spirit of P.T. Barnum, was inaccurately promoted as Britain's oldest operating cinema. This closed suddenly in 1983, to be demolished in days.

But both the State Kilburn and Troxy Stepney stand, as listed buildings and monuments to the taste and daring of Phil and his brothers. In fact, Phil Hyams celebrated his 100th birthday at a reception in Kilburn alongside the State.

Allen Eyles

Philip Hyams, film exhibitor, born London 26 March 1897; married 1919 Yetta Kramer (two sons); died London 8 January 1997.

Tony Hawes

"Tony Hawes, meet Denis Gifford," said Bob Monkhouse and Denis Goodwin after a broadcast they had written for Cyril Fletcher and Betty Astell. "He likes Laurel and Hardy too." Which is about as name-dropping a start for an obituary as has ever been written. We shook hands, had a beer and soon discovered we had even more in common than comedy.

He was a regular in the RAF: I was recently demobbed. He was a cartoonist with a penchant for comic strips; I was the same. He liked old movies and travelled miles to catch up on Boris Karloff reissues; so did I. In no time at all we were teaming up as comedy writers in the wake of our pals, Monkhouse and Goodwin, and our first business card read: "Gifford and Hawes for your scripts of course!"

Our career was held back by Tony's RAF contract, but in a while we were progressing fast enough for him to borrow from Bob enough money to buy himself out. I wasn't smart enough to take this as a warning of the shape of things to come. After some years of buying Tony threepenny-worth of chips to eat on the borrowed fourpenny bus ride home, we went our separate ways. But we came together again in time, and concluded our relationship, suddenly and shockingly, the best of chums.

Hawes was born in Blackheath, south-east London, in 1929, and joined the art staff of the *Bristol Evening World* as an apprentice cartoonist. A little later he came back to London in a slightly superior art job at the *Daily Mail*, helping their cartoonist "Spot" (Arthur Potts) draw the daily strip starring that paper's revived pre-war children's character, *Teddy Tail*. Hawes' most irritating, some would say irritating, charm was his regular recounting from memory the opening lines of a strip serial starring the mouse's insect mentor, Dr B (Beetle).

After National Service, Hawes failed to rejoin the *Mail* so signed on for a term. It was 1952 when we met, 1953 when we turned into a team. The BBC started a weekly concert party called *The Light Optimist*, an old-fashioned title for a new-fashioned series designed to star new talent and new writers. We had a go, sent in a script, and were thrilled to be sent tickets to see it performed. Of the handful of three-minuters we wrote, the best was a monologue for an old tram driver which began: "I am a driver – Albert Driver!" It was performed by a youthful newcomer who was already specialising in quivery old-timers, Clive Dunn.

The best thing we wrote together came to nought. Hawes had suggested we take a trip to the Brixton Empress, where who should be appearing but

Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, making their last lap of Britain. From the moment the band struck up with their signature tune, "The Dance of the Cuckoos", we were in a trance. "But they look just like them!", I said.

After the sketch, we went round to the stage door. We had suddenly come up with the idea that we might write a radio special for them. Yes, Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy would be pleased to see us. Well, we saw Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy, and there, incidentally, Hawes met his first wife, Helen, the barmaid. He played small roles in *The Soapbox Dairymen* (1957), a feature for the Children's Film Foundation, *Piccadilly Third Stop* (1960) and *The Frightened City* (1961), in both of which he played the foppish Lord Bunchholme – "pronounced Bunch-humel".

He also scripted several small pictures, beginning with *Hair of the Dog* (1961), in which Reginald Beckwith starred as a commissionaire at a razorblade



Hawes: 'A Cuddly Toy'

factory who caused a strike by growing a beard. Another was *Strictly for the Birds* (1963), with that forgotten talent, Tony Tanner, a Soho gambler.

Our paths crossed again when he guested on my *Looks Familiar* series, and he later became programme associate on *Quick on the Draw*, created to showcase popular cartoonists. We came together again with the Laurel and Hardy Appreciation Society. I had organised the Film Funters, the first British "Tent" of the Sons of the Desert as it was known, but found the work too demanding. A new organiser got both of us involved with the first ever International Convention, which took place in Hollywood in 1980. Hawes and I both went and met Stan Laurel's daughter, Lois. A little later Hawes married her. Thus does life itself neatly together, provided you live long enough.

Denis Gifford

Anthony John Hawes, actor and scriptwriter; born London 23 March 1929; twice married (one son); died Tarzana, California 13 February 1997.

Mary Bancroft

Mary Bancroft was that rarity in real life, a glamorous upper-class spy. She reached that condition by the tried and tested method of having a love affair with a man who was himself one of the most important spies of the Second World War and went on to be the most celebrated chief of America's Central Intelligence agency.

Allen Dulles had served as an American secret agent in Switzerland during the First World War. After the United States joined the Second World War, Colonel "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services, precursor of the CIA, gave Dulles the assignment of returning to Switzerland to create a network of intelligence inside Nazi Germany.

Dulles sent an NBC radio technician, Gerald Mayer, ahead to begin identifying possible agents, and one of the first people Mayer recruited was Mary Bancroft.

Then a handsome, bored married woman aged 38, Mary Bancroft had dropped out of Smith College in Massachusetts, and rebelled against the ultra-respectable life of a debutante in Beacon Hill, the Mayfair of Boston, where she was brought up by her stepgrandfather, C.W. Barron, who was the publisher of the *Wall Street Journal* and the founder of

business magazine which bears his name. Something of a Bright Young Thing, not to say a "goer", in the Jazz Age, Bancroft had been married twice, first to an American, then to the surprise of her friends, to a Swiss accountant called Jean Rufenacht. She tired of the marriage and first wrote a novel, then began to study the work of the great Swiss psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung.

She had many lovers, and as her husband's work took him away from home frequently, she was in restless and emotionally available mood – "randy and ready", says Dulles's biographer – when, early in December 1942, she was introduced to Allen Dulles over a drink at the ultra-discreet Hotel Baum at Lac in Zurich. Her upper-class credentials appealed to Dulles, himself the nephew and grandson (and later the brother) of American Secretaries of State, and a partner in the powerful New York law firm, Sullivan & Cromwell. But she was also a highly intelligent woman who had been living in Switzerland since 1934 and had acquired excellent French and German.

He quickly put the relationship on a more intimate basis by asking her to help him to find some bed-linen, scarce in wartime Bern, where he lived under diplomatic cover, and she obliged by lending him some

from her husband's country chalet.

Within days he took her for a walk along the lake in Zurich and put his double proposition to her with bluntness close to effrontery: "We can let the work cover the romance," he said, "and the romance cover the work."

Before long both work and romance had settled into an efficient and pleasurable routine. Every morning, at precisely 9.30, Dulles would telephone Bancroft and tell her what reports he needed translated. They kept their conversation secure by using American slang, something that was more impermeable in Switzerland in 1943 than it would be today.

Once a week she would take the train from Zurich to Bern, and check in at a cheap hotel opposite the station. She would then take a taxi to Dulles's comfortable home, where they would spend the day preparing a report for Washington. That evening Dulles would report to Donovan over a more or less secure radio-telephone, high technology and spy mistress would then retire to bed together.

Later, after Dulles had become the first head of the new Central Intelligence Agency and she had returned to New York, Bancroft also became close, though apparently not sexually involved with, Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life*, whose wife, Clare Booth

Loy, general manager, the Old Vic; Miss Julia McKenzie, actress and singer; 56; General Sir John Mogg, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe; 84; Professor Dr Clare Palley, former Principal, St Anne's College, Oxford; 66; Mr Gene Pitney, country and western singer and composer; 56; Mrs Ruth Rendell, crime novelist; 67; Miss Patricia Routledge, actress; 68; Mr Michael Shersby MP; 64; Lord Lynn of Hadley, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary; 73; Commandant Mary Talbot, former Director, WRNS; 75; Sir Anthony Wilson, former head of the Government Accountability Service; 69.

POQUELIN, playwright, 1673; (Harry) Heinrich Heine, poet, 1835; Graham Sutherland, painter, 1980; Evelyn Laye (Elise Evelyn Laye), actress and singer; 91; Sir John Martin, 1st Baronet, 1778; Sir John Moore, 1st Baronet, 1799; Sir John Moore, 2nd Baronet, 1821; Sir John Moore, 3rd Baronet, 1849; Sir John Moore, 4th Baronet, 1871; Sir John Moore, 5th Baronet, 1891; Sir John Moore, 6th Baronet, 1911; Sir John Moore, 7th Baronet, 1931; Sir John Moore, 8th Baronet, 1951; Sir John Moore, 9th Baronet, 1971; Sir John Moore, 10th Baronet, 1991; Sir John Moore, 11th Baronet, 2001; Sir John Moore, 12th Baronet, 2011; Sir John Moore, 13th Baronet, 2021; Sir John Moore, 14th Baronet, 2031; Sir John Moore, 15th Baronet, 2041; Sir John Moore, 16th Baronet, 2051; Sir John Moore, 17th Baronet, 2061; Sir John Moore, 18th Baronet, 2071; Sir John Moore, 19th Baronet, 2081; Sir John Moore, 20th Baronet, 2091; Sir John Moore, 21st Baronet, 2101; Sir John Moore, 22nd Baronet, 2111; Sir John Moore, 23rd Baronet, 2121; Sir John Moore, 24th Baronet, 2131; Sir John Moore, 25th Baronet, 2141; Sir John Moore, 26th Baronet, 2151; Sir John Moore, 27th Baronet, 2161; Sir John Moore, 28th Baronet, 2171; Sir John Moore, 29th Baronet, 2181; Sir John Moore, 30th Baronet, 2191; Sir John Moore, 31st Baronet, 2201; Sir John Moore, 32nd Baronet, 2211; Sir John Moore, 33rd Baronet, 2221; Sir John Moore, 34th Baronet, 2231; Sir John Moore, 35th Baronet, 2241; Sir John Moore, 36th Baronet, 2251; Sir John Moore, 37th Baronet, 2261; Sir John Moore, 38th Baronet, 2271; Sir John Moore, 39th Baronet, 2281; Sir John Moore, 40th Baronet, 2291; Sir John Moore, 41st Baronet, 2301; Sir John Moore, 42nd Baronet, 2311; Sir John Moore, 43rd Baronet, 2321; Sir John Moore, 44th Baronet, 2331; Sir John Moore, 45th Baronet, 2341; Sir John Moore, 46th Baronet, 2351; Sir John Moore, 47th Baronet, 2361; Sir John Moore, 48th Baronet, 2371; Sir John Moore, 49th Baronet, 2381; Sir John Moore, 50th Baronet, 2391; Sir John Moore, 51st Baronet, 2401; Sir John Moore, 52nd Baronet, 2411; Sir John Moore, 53rd Baronet, 2421; Sir John Moore, 54th Baronet, 2431; Sir John Moore, 55th Baronet, 2441; Sir John Moore, 56th Baronet, 2451; Sir John Moore, 57th Baronet, 2461; Sir John Moore, 58th Baronet, 2471; Sir John Moore, 59th Baronet, 2481; Sir John Moore, 60th Baronet, 2491; Sir John Moore, 61st Baronet, 2501; Sir John Moore, 62nd Baronet, 2511; Sir John Moore, 63rd Baronet, 2521; Sir John Moore, 64th Baronet, 2531; Sir John Moore, 65th Baronet, 2541; Sir John Moore, 66th Baronet, 2551; Sir John Moore, 67th Baronet, 2561; Sir John Moore, 68th Baronet, 2571; Sir John Moore, 69th Baronet, 2581; Sir John Moore, 70th Baronet, 2591; Sir John Moore, 71st Baronet, 2601; Sir John Moore, 72nd Baronet, 2611; Sir John Moore, 73rd Baronet, 2621; Sir John Moore, 74th Baronet, 2631; Sir John Moore, 75th Baronet, 2641; Sir John Moore, 76th Baronet, 2651; Sir John Moore, 77th Baronet, 2661; Sir John Moore, 78th Baronet, 2671; Sir John Moore, 79th Baronet, 2681; Sir John Moore, 80th Baronet, 2691; Sir John Moore, 81st Baronet, 2701; Sir John Moore, 82nd Baronet, 2711; Sir John Moore, 83rd Baronet, 2721; Sir John Moore, 84th Baronet, 2731; Sir John Moore, 85th Baronet, 2741; Sir John Moore, 86th Baronet, 2751; Sir John Moore, 87th Baronet, 2761; Sir John Moore, 88th Baronet, 2771; Sir John Moore, 89th Baronet, 2781; Sir John Moore, 90th Baronet, 2791; Sir John Moore, 91st Baronet, 2801; Sir John Moore, 92nd Baronet, 2811; Sir John Moore, 93rd Baronet, 2821; Sir John Moore, 94th Baronet, 2831; Sir John Moore, 95th Baronet, 2841; Sir John Moore, 96th Baronet, 2851; Sir John Moore, 97th Baronet, 2861; Sir John Moore, 98th Baronet, 2871; Sir John Moore, 99th Baronet, 2881; Sir John Moore, 100th Baronet, 2891; Sir John Moore, 101st Baronet, 2901; Sir John Moore, 102nd Baronet, 2911; Sir John Moore, 103rd Baronet, 2921; Sir John Moore, 104th Baronet, 2931; Sir John Moore, 105th Baronet, 2941; Sir John Moore, 106th Baronet, 2951; Sir John Moore, 107th Baronet, 2961; Sir John Moore, 108th Baronet, 2971; Sir John Moore, 109th Baronet, 2981; Sir John Moore, 110th Baronet, 2991; Sir John Moore, 111th Baronet, 3001; Sir John Moore, 112th Baronet, 3011; Sir John Moore, 113th Baronet, 3021; Sir John Moore, 114th Baronet, 3031; Sir John Moore, 115th Baronet, 3041; Sir John Moore, 116th Baronet, 3051; Sir John Moore, 117th Baronet, 3061; Sir John Moore, 118th Baronet, 3071; Sir John Moore, 119th Baronet, 3081; Sir John Moore, 120th Baronet, 3091; Sir John Moore, 121st Baronet, 3101; Sir John Moore, 122nd Baronet, 3111; Sir John Moore, 123rd Baronet, 3121; Sir John Moore, 124th Baronet, 3131; Sir John Moore, 125th Baronet, 3141; Sir John Moore, 126th Baronet, 3151; Sir John Moore, 127th Baronet, 3161; Sir John Moore, 128th Baronet, 3171; Sir John Moore, 129th Baronet, 3181; Sir

business & city

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Pearson backs ex-Penguin boss ahead of grilling

Nigel Cope

The Pearson board yesterday stood behind Peter Mayer, the former head of Penguin Books in America, saying it believed he had no knowledge of the accounting scandal that has forced the media group to take a £100m charge against its 1996 accounts.

The backing came as Pearson prepares to interview Mr Mayer about the affair today following his return to the US after a six-

week holiday in Europe. A senior Pearson figure said yesterday that Mr Mayer would not prove a reluctant interviewee: "Peter was obviously in charge of the company for a long time and he would insist on being interviewed about this."

Asked if the board believed Mr Mayer was aware of the complex accounting scheme, the Pearson insider said "absolutely not".

Asked if he should have known, they said: "If the audi-

tors did not know and did not discover the cover-up, then you would not necessarily expect the chief executive to know."

This view has been challenged by some City analysts, who say that while they accept that the invoice procedure in publishing houses borders on chaos, certain factors should have set alarm bells ringing. "They were seeing debtor levels rise. Why didn't they question that?" one said.

Mr Mayer became chief ex-

ecutive of Penguin USA in 1978. He resigned late last year to run Overlook Press, a New York-based publishing house he founded in the early 1970s.

Pearson maintains that the complex accounting scheme, which involved book retailers being given unauthorised discounts in return for early payment, was the work of one woman who has since been dismissed.

It is unclear if the woman is still helping Pearson with its in-

quiries into the matter. "She was. I'm not sure if she still is. She's not very happy," Pearson said.

Pearson believes the byzantine system of accounting transactions created to deceive management and auditors was not an act of fraud but a cover-up. So far Pearson has discovered no evidence of any financial gain by the woman that would have provided her with a motive.

As the investigation by new

auditors Price Waterhouse continues, there is concern among City analysts that Penguin's 1997 sales could be affected.

They say retail customers in the US must have known about the discounts and possibly increased their orders accordingly. Some analysts believe that following the termination of the scheme, there is a danger that retailers will buy fewer books from Penguin as they will now be paying higher prices. "You just don't know what the

profit will be under the new regime," one analyst said.

It is possible that retailers who did not receive the discounts may take legal action to force Penguin to make a retrospective payout. Under an agreement between book publishers and the American Booksellers Association in late 1994, publishers undertook to treat all retailers on equal terms. However, as the agreement was not enshrined in law, it is unclear if it will stand.

Centrica battles to save £150m in taxes

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Centrica, the British Gas supply business which starts life as an independent company today, is negotiating with the Government to slash its tax bill in a move that could boost its profits by around £150m a year.

The discussions are part of Centrica's drive to lessen the huge financial burden from its "take-or-pay" contracts with the leading oil companies to buy gas at well above market prices.

The new tax deal revolves around huge sums in petroleum revenue tax levied on gas production in Centrica's vast Morecambe Bay fields, which represent the newly demerged company's main asset.

Under an agreement struck in 1986 with the Oil Taxation Office (OTO), an offshoot of the Inland Revenue, British Gas had to pay tax and royalties on gas it supplied itself from Morecambe based on a price believed to be about 27p a therm. However since 1994 the price of gas has slumped to around 13p.

A senior Centrica source confirmed that negotiations were going on with the OTO. "We are trying to bring prices down in line with those in the market." However the source added that it would be a tough job to find a solution.

The OTO has the right to set the company's notional gas price for tax purposes because the internal contracts to buy gas from Morecambe Bay only involve Centrica itself. The Government aims to prevent the group from setting an unrealistically low internal price to cut its tax liability, a tactic known as "gaming".

The sticking point in the discussions is the difficulty of putting a value on Morecambe's gas, which provides around 7 per cent of the UK's entire supply. The fields are unique in providing for the massive swings in demand during the year seen in the domestic market, where Centrica has an almost total monopoly. It means Morecambe's gas price is likely to be higher than the spot price in the energy markets.

The dilemma explains why Centrica is seeking to offer a stake in Morecambe Bay to either Esso or Shell as a bargaining tool in its take-or-pay negotiations. The two producers are expected to be the next companies to agree to renegotiate some of the contracts.

Simon Flowers, head of utilities at NatWest Securities, suggested a cut in the Morecambe price of 25 per cent would net Centrica £150m a year with a corresponding loss to Treasury coffers. Over the life of the field, until around 2020, it was predicted that the company about £1bn in current prices.



Return match: Sandy Anderson has emerged as a potential backer of a new shareholder bid

Photograph: Empics

Nigel Cope

Sandy Anderson has emerged as the potential backer of a group of Nottingham Forest shareholders who are planning a last-minute bid for the club.

The Porterbrook Leasing millionaire, who has already had one bid for the club turned down, is thought to be willing to invest £3m-£4m in an offer being put together by former

Forest chairman Fred Reacher and two other directors, Keith Gibson and Jamie Mellors.

The move comes just days

ahead of a crunch meeting next

Monday when Forest share-

holder will vote on the bids

made by the Albert Scardino

group and a rival consortium

led by Nigel Wray and local author Phil Soar.

The Anderson-backed pro-

posal would see each of Forest's 202 shareholders receive around £50,000 for their stake, far more than under each of the two other bids.

Last week, letters were sent

to Forest shareholders by Phil Murdoch, a local antiquities dealer who is also a share-

holder, suggesting that they

vote against both the Scardino

and Wray-Soar bids.

However, Mr Anderson is

thought to be unwilling to indulge in any spoiling tactics. He has made it clear that he will

only re-enter the fray if neither of the two bids are successful next week.

Both Mr Reacher and Sandy

Anderson were in the directors'

box at Forest's FA cup defeat at

Chesterfield on Saturday along

with other well-known Forest

fans including Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke.

The emergence of a third bid

has been greeted with dismay by

some Forest shareholders. They

say further delays to the own-

ership question could jeopardise

the club's future.

Forest's bankers are said to

be ready to call in loans made

to the club the day after next

week's emergency meeting if

neither of the bids is successful.

Larry Lloyd, a former Forest

player and now a sports pre-

senter on Radio Trent, said

yesterday: "If this happens I fear

for the club. I have spoken to

some other shareholders and

they feel the same."

It is understood that a share-

holder buyout of Forest was dis-

cussed last autumn but dismis-

sed on the grounds it was not

financially viable.

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£1bn in current prices.

Utilities 'complacent' over 2000 crisis

The heads of the privatised utilities have been accused of complacency by a government-sponsored taskforce over their response to the looming 2000 computer crisis, writes Chris Godsmark.

Taskforce 2000, the body set up by the Department of Trade and Industry to publicise the so-called "millennium problem",

wrote to the chief executives of all the utilities in November asking them what preparations their companies had made. However, only a third of the utilities bothered to reply to the letter. Robin Guenier, head of the taskforce, described the response as "extremely thin".

Industry experts have pre-

dicted chaos across the world as

computer systems shut themselves down when the date changes. Most programmes can only register the last two digits of the year, so that when 2000 approaches, many will interpret the date as 1900, causing widespread and unpredictable problems.

Taskforce 2000 fears that electricity supplies will be cut off in many places as fall-safe

systems are automatically activated.

Though the Taskforce 2000

letter was addressed to chief ex-

ecutives in the utilities, only two

replicated in person. The rest of the responses were mostly de-

ferred to less senior individuals.

Mr Guenier said he would take

up the issue with the compa-

nies personally.

IN BRIEF

• John Monks, TUC General Secretary, warned that the introduction of a minimum wage could have a knock-on effect on jobs. Mr Monks, in an interview on LWT's *Dimbleby* programme, said: "Nobody knows at all what the effects of pay on jobs are ... There could or might not be some knock-on." Labour and the TUC support the introduction of a minimum wage and the European Social Chapter although Labour has so far refused to set a level for the minimum wage. Shadow treasury secretary Alastair Darling pledged, on the same programme, that a Labour government would not adopt a level which would disrupt the economy.

• Pay awards are flat in manufacturing industry but rising in services, according to a report published today. The Confederation of British Industry said its pay databank showed pay awards for the three months to the end of December. That is unchanged from the figure for the three months to September and down from 3.7 per cent for the corresponding period in 1995. A third of manufacturers said that their inability to raise prices was keeping down pay awards. However, in the bigger service sector, pay awards increased slightly with awards provisionally averaging 3.8 per cent in the three months to December compared with 3.6 per cent in the previous quarter and 3.4 per cent a year ago.

• Investcorp, the Bahrain-based investment group, reported record 1996 profits yesterday. Its net earnings rose 28.6 per cent to \$90.4m, and the group said it planned to double dividends. The strong performance was in large part due to the sale of its remaining holding in Gucci, the Italian luxury goods maker. The company also said it was poised for new acquisitions in Europe and the US, but would not comment on a weekend newspaper report that Investcorp is the front-runner to buy Welcome Break, the chain of motorway service stations, from Granada.

• Air UK and KLM are to integrate their sales and marketing functions from April, allowing the co-ordination of the two carriers' UK, European and inter-continent flights via Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. The two have combined turnover in the UK of about £400m. Air UK operates from Stansted and London City airports.

• Germany is beating the UK in the rate at which it is creating high-technology jobs, according to a new study. Six out of the top 10 European regions for employment in high-tech sectors are in Germany, headed by Baden-Württemberg and Saarland. The top UK region is the West Midlands, at number seven, according to research by the TUC.

Stephen Vines

Hong Kong

Today Hong Kong stockbrokers get down to the first full week of business since the start of the Chinese Year of the Ox, which may not turn out to quite so bullish as the year's name suggests.

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KEVIN GARDINER

'Is it not inconsistent to be worrying about a prospective glut of labour (unemployment) and a shortage (too many pensioners) at the same time?'

Labouring under delusions about cost of old age

The rise in German unemployment in January was another shocking illustration of how badly Europe's labour markets perform. The immediate social cost of such wasteful levels of unemployment is high and obvious. But the full economic costs are still not fully appreciated. High unemployment contributes to the European pensions crisis - the two problems are largely one and the same.

If European unemployment can be brought down, and employment boosted, the economic burden imposed by the need to provide adequate old-age pensions will automatically become much lighter. Indeed, if continental unemployment and labour force participation rates move closer to British and US levels, old-age pensions might even be funded, in an economic sense, on a pay-as-you-go basis indefinitely. Europe has a labour market problem, not a pension problem. This view is markedly at odds with received wisdom. A sharp rise in the number of European pensioners relative to the number of adults of working age, is a demographic inevitability. And most continental pension provision is funded and paid from ongoing tax receipts.

As a result, it is taken for granted that Europe will find it difficult to support its pensioner population because the tax base will shrink. The report of the UK Social Security Select Committee in October on unfunded pension liabilities in the EU provides a recent illustration of consensus thinking on the subject. However, the crude

demographic arithmetic is misleading. The age profile of the population is only one of the many factors influencing the dependency burden. Most importantly, adults in work support not just the elderly, but also non-working adults - those who have chosen not to participate in the workforce.

The extent of adult dependency varies considerably across countries, and through time. In the US and the UK, participation rates are high, and unemployment is low, partly reflecting the flexibility of labour supply and demand. And in both countries, participation rates have risen in the last 20 years as household habits have changed. In Europe, participation rates are relatively low, and unemployment is high. As a result, labour is a factor of production utilised. But relatively small changes in the employed portion of the population of working age can have a big effect on the dependency arithmetic.

The point is easily illustrated. Over the next quarter-century, the proportion of the French population aged 65 and above will rise from roughly 15 to 21 per cent, while the proportion of working age will fall slightly, from 65 to 63 per cent: as a result, the ratio of pensioners to potential workers will rise from 23 to 33 per cent, a proportionate increase of more than two-fifths. This is the conventional arithmetic: it suggests a sharp, potentially worrying rise in dependency.

However, only 88 per cent of the French workforce is currently employed; and with a participation rate of roughly 67 per cent this in turn probably represents just 59 per cent of the population of working age, or just 36 per cent of the total population. Meanwhile, if we add the non-working portion of the non-retired adult population to those who are retired, the proportion of adult "dependents" rises from 15 per cent of the total population to 42 per cent.

When the denominator is adjusted downwards accordingly, and the numerator upwards, the current dependency ratio rises sharply, to more than 100 per cent. Thus in France there are already more adult dependents than there are workers. In itself, this simple adjustment makes the problem look dramatically different. If the pattern of participation and employment remains the same, but the population's age structure evolves as expected over the next quarter-century, the resultant rise in the ratio of pen-

sioners to potential workers turns out to be one-fifth, not two-fifths, a much smaller increase. Non-working adults age alongside the workers.

But the arithmetic really becomes interesting if we suppose that in the quarter-century ahead, France is able, via a combination of more flexible working practices and changes in household preferences, to approach the sort of unemployment and participation rates seen in the UK and the US. Then, instead of rising, adult dependency might actually fall by the year 2020, perhaps by as much as one-fifth.

This is a sensible possibility. Of course, it takes no account of details such as the extent of part-time employment and low pay, but it illustrates the potential importance of changes in labour market practice. Other continental economies are in a similar position. In principle, today's pay-as-you-go intra-family transfers (housekeeping), unemployment benefits and student grants could provide tomorrow's pay-as-you-go pensions - if European labour markets reform.

This also understates the potential good news. Economies that employ a bigger proportion of their population will be more productive, and the size of the economic cake available for redistribution could be much bigger than is currently predicted on the basis of past growth trends. Thus at one end of the

spectrum is the current spectre of longer working lives and lowered pension entitlements; at the other lies the tantalising prospect of a longer and wealthier retirement.

A less wasteful usage of European labour need not prevent the long-awaited shift from public to private-sector pension schemes on the Continent. In an increasingly unified, flexible labour market in which workers are able and willing to change jobs and move more often than in the past, private savings schemes may become more attractive in their own right. Meanwhile, the growing interest in equities in the European financial markets is likely to give a further boost to the process. But a more productive Europe will be better able to meet the claims on future output which these schemes represent than a Europe that continues to squander its valuable human resources.

The arithmetical illustration above, while extreme, is not beyond the realms of possibility: the UK unemployment rate has moved in a 9-point range in the last quarter-century, the participation rate in a 5-point range. The political pressure to do something about European unemployment is rising. Is it not inconsistent to be worrying about both a prospective glut of labour (unemployment) and a shortage (too many pensioners) at the same time?

Kevin Gardiner is a senior economist at Morgan Stanley International: the views expressed are his own.

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The elderly are not the only dependants



UK set for £20bn telecoms boost

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Britain could receive a £20bn trade boost during the next decade from the sweeping free trade pact in telecommunications announced at the World Trade Organisation at the weekend.

The UK, along with the US, is in a strong position to benefit from the possible doubling in size of the \$600bn world telecommunications market. The new deal was announced, to applause in the WTO's Geneva headquarters, just a few hours before the midnight on Saturday deadline for negotiations to end.

Ian Taylor, Britain's science and technology minister, said: "The agreement in Geneva

should usher in an explosive growth in turnover and investment worldwide." The UK telecoms industry already had a turnover twice the size of the car industry, he said.

Charlene Barshefsky, the US trade representative, was equally upbeat. "We expect the agreement will lead to the creation of approximately a million UK jobs in the next 10 years," she said. The industries that would benefit ranged from communications companies themselves to equipment makers, electronic publishers and software providers.

Sir Leon Brittan, the EU's Trade Commissioner, said: "In addition to what this deal will do for the telecoms industry, it is a major step also in the creation of the information society."

The UN's International Telecommunications Union predicted that the telecoms industry's world revenues could almost double to \$1,200bn by the year 2000. Neil McMillan, chairman of the WTO talks, predicted a \$1,000bn increase in investment, and predicted the new deal would slash personal and business phone bills.

For all the euphoria about their potential benefits, the WTO talks came close to collapse at several stages. The original deadline for a telecoms trade deal was April 1996, but some countries - most importantly, the US - were concerned about opening their markets without good enough reciprocal access to overseas markets.

A breakthrough agreement in

principle came in December at the WTO's annual meeting in Singapore. But even then there were doubts that enough countries would sign up to make it viable. A late US concession opened the way for the pact covering 95 per cent of the world's telecoms trade.

Mr Taylor said yesterday that Britain was well placed to take advantage of growing trade and investment in telecommunications. "We were the first in Europe, and one of the first in the world, to introduce competition in 1984. Our experience in the UK of vastly improved services and some £4bn a year being invested in making the UK the most advanced network in the world, has shown what such a deal can offer to the whole world," he said.



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Min PhotoCopier	£695	£85	Police S2B scooter	£22,000	£7,500
Cashbox Counter	£345	£85	An Office Desk	£250	£25
Peugeot 205 Car CD	£300	£25	Defibrillator	£220	£22
Castor Fishing Tackle	£300	£25	100 Computer Games	£220	£22
Computer Components	£4,000	£400	Swiss X30 Camera	£1,000	£1,000
Computer Design Systems	£1,000	£100	1500 Mobile Phone	£100	£1
Radio Tapes	£100	£15	PCs	£350	£35
Carles Schenker	£75	£25	Air Conditioning System	£2,000	£50
NFC Office Phone System	£300	£25	Leisure Chaise Longue Bed	£350	£5
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Monday 17 February 1997: The week starts here

I stood on the pavement outside 52 Poland Street in Soho, looking into a bright new restaurant called Yel. The establishment is Japanese, in which language the word means roughly what it does in English.

Some hundred people can sit at a winding counter and watch a 60-metre conveyor belt come chugging by bearing 300 plates of sushi and sashimi. The colour band on the plate determines the price: from £1 (lime green) for cucumber sushi, to £2.80 (purple) for a sea slug Salmon, eel, tuna and prawn are differently coloured and cost in between.

Three robotic drink trolleys cruise their selected paths behind the diners, travelling at the speed of a fast tortoise; they bear cold beers and warm rice wine. The restaurant exercises a hollow glass policy: it gets you unlimited still or sparkling water from a tap by your side. Say sauce, sliced marinated ginger and green-tinted Japanese horseradish – so strong that a milligram makes you catch your breath while your eyes water – are free.

Across the counter on the staff side of the production line, surgically gowned young men and women restock the gaps in the line. A man called Hamish, who does not look Japanese (turns out to come from Framlingham, Suffolk), explains all, and is there should you need further enlightenment or the bill; this is assessed on the number and colour of empty plates in front of you, and ignores the ones you have been able to slip into your jacket pocket.

In a café in Ilfracombe I once heard a waiter call into the kitchen: "Double egg, chips and beans chef; it's for the table in the window."

I asked why the position of the table mattered.

"We always serve bigger portions to the table in the window."

Nothing like that at Yel, where the voeux on the pavement see little but the creeping drink trolley and the backs of contented diners – though many confronted by the endless line of barrel-shaped morsels would probably welcome the sight of a red, white and blue plate bearing fried quail's eggs with pommes allumettes. Yo to egg and chips; to hell with all exclamation marks.

David Austin, who died last week, was elected to Parliament on the same day as me. Between us, we caused an overnight 25 per cent increase in Liberal representation in the House, something that has probably not been done before, and is certainly fairly unique. (I have stopped being the only person not to qualify the word "unique".)



Clement Freud

Many would probably welcome the sight of a red, white and blue plate bearing fried quail's eggs with pommes allumettes

Perhaps Mrs Bottomley will read this and write to me.

Unlike Rosemary Foster, who recorded 225mg on the breathalyser (see right), the only time I was asked to blow into the bag was when I had not touched alcohol for a month.

I had reversed my vintage Bentley out of the drive into the hedge on the opposite side of the country road, and the engine cut out. After protracted investigation, I discovered that dirt from the hedge was blocking the car's exhaust.

I opened the tool kit, found a long, silver-plated starting-handle and thrust it up the pipe to clear the impediment. A passing police car took one look at what was going on and two men got out, one of whom said: "Excuse me, sir ..."

Having "got in" on 27 July 1973, we took our seats at the end of the summer recess, three months later; served five weeks; adjourned for the Christmas recess; and came back to learn of the prorogation announcement for the February 1974 election. But, nevertheless, we had our moments.

On the day we took our seats, the Liberal press office, concerned about what are now called "sound bites", decided that it would be safer to opt for a photo-opportunity and hired a bicycle made for two. Being good Liberals, we argued about who was to ride in front, an argument I finally lost by virtue of age, alphabetical precedence and seniority of service (his result had been announced an hour and 10 minutes before mine). However, as neither of us had ridden a tandem, we stood on either side of the bike and posed for photographers, one of whom asked what were our policies. Austin thought site valuation rating was probably the sexiest one on our agenda.

That afternoon in the chamber, our party, renowned for meeting in telephone boxes, achieved double figures. Jeremy Thorpe regarded us proudly, beamed at Austin, turned in his whip and said, "We've got a backbencher at last."

Austin lost his seat at that first general election; I lasted longer. Had I hung on, I would be asking the Heritage Secretary at question time whether it is the Government, Camelot or the "good causes" who are beneficiaries of interest on delayed and unclaimed winning lottery tickets, and whether she will give an estimate of the sum involved.

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Ralph Fiennes as Ivanov, a hero of tragic proportions

Time to catch another Fiennes role

Theatre: After the stunning *Cherry Orchard* at London's Albery Theatre, *Ivanov*, a lesser-known Chekhov, opens today at the Almeida. This is a play of immense power. It may lack the web-like intricacies of his other works, but easily makes up dramatic ground with a tragic hero of Hamlet proportions – appropriately, since the star, Ralph Fiennes, and director Jonathan Kent last collaborated on *Hamlet* at the Hackney Empire three years ago. The production co-stars Harriet Walter. Only a few tickets are left – £6.50, for the whale run until April – so you'll really have to get a move on. (0171-359 4404) Performance starts: 7.30pm.

From Hodgkin to Hogg, from Travolta to something bizarre in Shropshire, this is the page to help make sure you don't miss out on anything you don't want to miss out on

Sad to be grey

Theatre: If you haven't seen the Howard Hodgkin exhibition by now, where have you been? The vast swathes of colours amidst a grey winter and grey Hayward Gallery are too wonderful and vast to be ignored. Our critic wrote: "Like the smile of the Cheshire Cat in Alice, a generalised light-drenched mood seems to be transmitted from the paintings." Soon you'll be too late; it closes this Sunday, Hayward Gallery, London. Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Tue & Wed until 8pm. Tickets £5, £3.50.

Angel face

Film (here): Reaffirm your faith in love with John Travolta's new film *Michael* (nationwide from Friday). It's a tale about an angel with an endearingly human taste for booze, women and cigarettes.

Film (there): The Berlin Film Festival is in its final week. Look in the "Forum" section for young directors. Also *Panna & Nikt*, by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, on 23 February. Fly from Heathrow on Thursday for the last three days of the festival for £112 return with BA. For the festival: 06 4930 25 48 92 50

Pigging out

Pop: The Longines' gig at London's Forum is already sold out. There will be a few £8.50 tickets at the door on Thursday if you'd like to see the angsty, Sheffield indie guitar quartet in action.

Tutti frutti

Opera: Spring is here! Farewell to the wintry darkness of Palestrina and Lohengrin at the Royal Opera House (19 and 22 February 6pm). Welcome Jonathan Miller's light pastel-coloured Osci fan *Tutti* (21 February to 19 March, 7pm, £19.50 - £100).

Still One-derful?

Listening: Today we'll discover whether there's life after the Ginger One-derful. Chris Evans has deserted Radio 1, and so have 500,000 listeners. Today we get the sounds of the north at breakfast with Mark Radcliffe. What's Tony Blackburn up to these days?

Superwoman. Superman?

Reading: Cosmopolitan, the magazine that taught women to juggle orgasms, men and work has a long-distance competitor. If you are in Shropshire tomorrow and happen to see a car hurtling through the air, you're probably watching the launch



John Travolta: angelic

of Bizarre, a magazine mainly for men. The first issue investigates herbal highs, the curse of Superman and Holland's No 1 orgy organiser. It is on news-stands from Wednesday.

Cheers, tears

Drinking (1): The champion winter beer of Britain will be announced at the Great British Winter Beer Festival, Canderlings Hall, Glasgow (Thurs-Sat).

Drinking (2 much): A woman who drove on a motorway nearly six-and-a-half times over the limit will be sentenced today at Macclesfield, Cheshire. The breath test reading of 225mg given by 23-year-old Rosemary Foster is the highest ever by a woman.

Where's the beef?

Politics: "Beef is perfectly safe and a good product" claimed Douglas Hogg in November 1995. This was disproved less than a year later, and Hogg's handling of the crisis has made him the most vulnerable member of the Cabinet. Now the Labour Party fancies going for the jugular with a motion of censure against him for debate today. It could (though it is unlikely) bring down the Government. If he survives all the sound and fury, Major will fight back on Thursday in an attack in the Commons on Labour's plans for constitutional reform, which he believes is Blair's Achilles' heel (the Tories don't have one, of course). After this will be a show of unity, at their Local Government Conference in Birmingham on Friday and Saturday. John Major will be speaking at a rally afterwards.

Research: Graeme Hehir James Aufenast

Watch out for ...



Danielle Gatti, new man at the RPO, talks to Malcolm Hayes

GCSE at 7

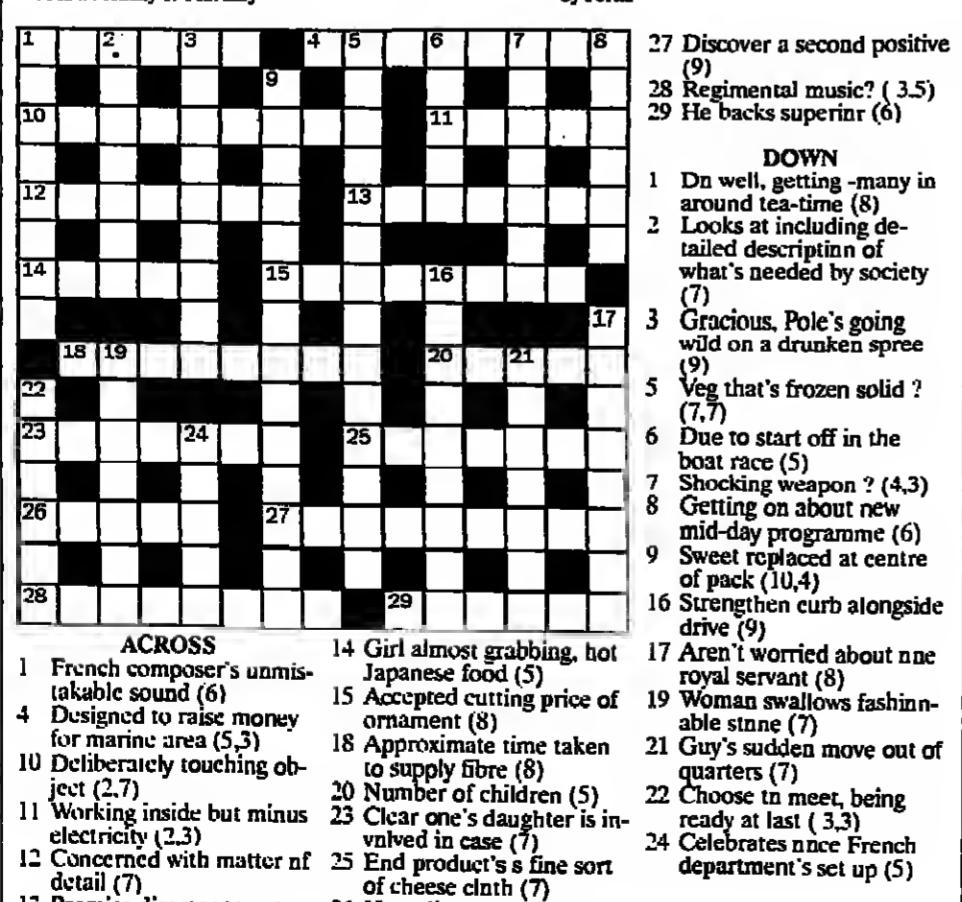
Do we expect enough of our children?
EDUCATION +

Winona Ryder talks to Emma Forrest about *'The Crucible'*

This week in THE INDEPENDENT

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

By Portia



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